

Sketch of the 50 Years of the Pickerings

(Read by Elizabeth Pickering Walls, Music by Francis Pickering Longenecker, violin, and Maxine Keller Sauers, piano.)

"When you and I were Young Maggie"

Some fifty odd years ago, Bertha Davis moved with her father, step-mother and younger sister from New Mexico to Boulder, Colorado. At Boulder's Free Methodist Church, she met the young Sunday School superintendent, Frank I. Pickering, who took a particular interest in her welfare.

"Old Gray Mare"

In fact, Frank quickly purchased a horse and buggy to take his girl friend riding. The sixty-dollar horse, Nellie, was a cow pony, trained to leap as soon as she felt the foot in the stirrup. So---when hitched to the buggy, Nellie was ready to run as soon as she felt a step on the buggy. This presented some difficulty, but Frank managed to control her while helping Bertha into the rig. When he gave the pony the reins, however, they were off like a shot and could travel fast. The romance blossomed with similar speed.

"I love you truly"

They were married in 1910 by Rev. J. P. Dowd, the local Free Methodist pastor. Esther Davis, now Mrs. Keller, was one of the witnesses to the marriage ceremony.

In October, 1910, Frank received a civil service appointment as clerk at the Mounted Service School, Ft. Riley, Kansas. At 5:30 A. M., October 22, 1910, a frosty Kansas morning, Frank and Bertha got off the Union Pacific train at Fort Riley. The red-hot pot-bellied stove made the deserted waiting room comfortable. At daylight, they walked about the post to see what an Army post

looked like; they saw no cannons or battlements--just buildings.

"Home, Sweet Home"

At Junction City, five miles from Fort Riley, they found a three-room house for six dollars per month. One unusual feature of this house was an opening in the roof permitting one inside to look up at the stars. Subsequently, they moved to somewhat more luxurious quarters for ten dollars per month--four rooms and screened porch, but still no clothes closets or water in the house.

"What a Friend"

At the Free Methodist Church, Frank and Bertha were welcomed with open arms and told later that their coming was in answer to prayer. They were soon deep in the work of the church, teaching Sunday School classes, superintending the Sunday School and both serving as Class Leaders. Frank was elected delegate to the Kansas Annual Conference each of the five years they were in Junction City. At Conference, he served assistant secretary with Rev. E. C. Lindley, the district elder, serving as secretary. In 1912, a son was born and named Gordon Lindley, after Rev. Lindley, who was greatly interested in young people. Here the mother and son Gordon came near the crossing, but God graciously restored them. For reasons of health, both parents and infant son slept on an open porch both summer and winter.

"Bicycle Built for Two"

Here also the "auto fever" struck Frank and in 1912 they bought a 1909, two-cylinder, twelve horsepower Maxwell. When Frank asked the dealer if the car would take him to Colorado,

the dealer replied: "It should, it is geared low enough." The trip to Colorado proved impractical, however, because the car would take high gear only when traveling on the level or going down hill, and Colorado, unfortunately, was very much uphill. The car was a runabout or roadster and was used to travel to annual conference, to hold Sunday School at some country school house, and for pleasure driving--although it occasionally stopped because of flat tires, fould spark plugs, and miscellaneous other difficulties. Bertha used it to deliver goods to her Larkin Club members, thereby adding to the family income.

"Deep in Heart of Texas"

In September 1915, the family moved to San Antonio, where Frank served with the Army Headquarters. It was the time of the Mexican border trouble, and "Black Jack" Pershing was chasing Villa into Mexico. Frank's position soon became military, and he was appointed an Army Field Clerk and made subject to the ruled and Articles of War. In other words, "He was in the Army now".

"I hate to get up in the morning"

At beginning of World War I they were ordered into uniform, the blouse, with standing collar, buttoned tight, the breeches with tight legs and leather leggins, an "Eagle" on the cap and crossed quills and Adjutant General's shield on the collar.

The first three of the eleven years in Texas were marked by numerous sicknesses--malaria, boils, Dengue fever, etc.

"Brahms Lullaby"

Three little Texans arrived to double the family size-- Elizabeth, Frances and Virginia (now deceased). One day, Elizabeth when about three years old, decided to go to meet her daddy coming home from the office, neglecting to check with her

mother. The first her mother knew of new absence was a phone call asking if her little girl was at home. Bertha told the caller to ask her name, as she would tell him if she was Elizabeth. When found, she was walking along a street in Fort Sam Houston, having crossed two dangerous intersections. The one who found her took her to the post office, as she had told them her daddy worked in the post office. (He did work on the Post in an office).

The house in San Antonio was located near the wood yard and the Southern Pacific R. R. yard. It was noisy, but the children found it a good place for play. They had a tree house in the back yard and still another hide-out for Gordon which was off limits for all girls, including his sisters. Their outdoor telephone system of string and bottle caps worked quite effectively when they shouted loudly enough.

While in San Antonio, the Pickerings and another family, the Fingers, handled the sale of the Free Methodist church property and its relocation on Prospect Hill. This later became the present Latin-American Free Methodist church. Before the new church was built, however, they were ordered to Hawaii and left in May 1926, to the dismay of the newly organized church on Prospect Hill.

The trip in the Maxwell touring car to San Francisco took the family by way of Kansas, where they visited Bertha's sister and family, the Kellers; Colorado, for a visit with Frank's relatives and a few days in Rocky Mountain National Park; sightseeing around Salt Lake City; and Long Beach, Calif. where they visited Bertha's other sister Mrs. Cook and family and enjoyed the oranges from the Cook's orange grove.

"Rocked in Cradle of Deep"

The voyage on the U. S. Army transport St. Mihiel took six days and after the first meal--served as the boat left the pier--Gordon and Virginia were the only members regularly at the table. Gordon took such good care of his little four-year-old sister in the dining room, that a couple on the boat with whom they became acquainted, named their son, who was born soon afterward, Gordon. (He is now an instructor at the U. S. Air Force Academy in Colorado.)

"Aloha Oe"

The family was met at the boat by a representative of the Warrant Officers Assn, as Frank was now a Warrant Officer. Leis were placed about the neck of each member of the family - a seemingly strange but locally acceptable decoration for an Army uniform. The first Sunday, they went, six strong, to the First Methodist Church on Beretania and caused a sensation thereby. This was a new kind of Army family!!

They found Honolulu most interesting - wonderful weather, fine swimming, a post office with windows opening on the porch with no doors to open. All learned to swim well except Virginia who paddled about in an inner tube. Frank was in charge of clerical personnel in the Judge Advocate's office at Ft. Shafter. Both Bertha and Frank taught Sunday School classes, and Frank served as Sunday School Supt. for two years.

"Out Where the West Begins"

In 1929, orders called for transfer to Omaha, Nebr., and the family sailed to San Francisco in May of that Year. In San Francisco, a two-wheeled trailer was purchased and a camping outfit assembled for a summer of touring before reporting to

Omaha in September. They journeyed North to Portland where Gordon, who had been attending Central Academy and College in Kansas, joined them. From thence, they visited Seattle and Seattle Pacific College, Yellowstone Park, the Rockies, South Dakota (to see Frank's birthplace and where Bertha had also lived on a farm) and then as far East as Ohio where Frank's only brother lived.

"Bringing In The Sheaves"

In Omaha, they built a seven-room house across the street from the Free Methodist church and entered energetically into work with the young people. Both taught in the Sunday School, and Bertha's class of Junior boys stayed with her during the entire seven years in Omaha. By this time the boys had become young people and the class expanded to include girls. Bertha also developed an a capella chorus of teen-age young people in which both Frances and Virginia participated. Hikes and parties helped maintain the enthusiasm and loyalty of this active group of young people. There was lots of good fun as well as some occasional pranks. On one occasion the girls were enjoying a slumber party at the Pickering residence and two huge platters of donuts had been prepared for them. During the evening one platter mysteriously disappeared-- the boys just could not stand to miss out on the festivities. Later they admitted they meant to eat only a few of them, but Mrs. Pickering's donuts tasted so good they couldn't stop until the platter was emptied. At the time of their 25th wedding anniversary, a youth conference was being held in the Pickering basement with YPMS young people serving and washing the dishes.

These were depression days with one and later two children in

college and Frank supplemented military income by selling Pyroil to garages, mills and service stations. Pyroil has kept Pickering automobile engines purring ever since.

"Sweet Leilani"

In the spring of 1936, it was back to Hawaii, with but one week to pack up and get to New York to board ship. Gordon, having graduated from Greenville in 1935, stayed in Nebraska working on an engineering project. The family drove East, picking up Elizabeth at Greenville College, to the disappointment of a young man named Wesley, and sailed from Brooklyn June 2, 1936. It was a delightful 30-day trip without sea-sickness, thanks to the slow, stable U. S. Army Transport Republic. An entire day was spent going thru the Panaman Canal (because of Congressmen on board.)

Arriving in Honolulu, they were met by the pastor of the Methodist Church who importuned Frank to take the superintendency of the Sunday School. Reluctantly Frank accepted and served the two years they were in Honolulu. This time they found a house in Monoa Valley where the rainfall is 75 inches per year. Mildew was a problem and it was necessary to keep a light burning in the piano to prevent rusting.

Gordon soon joined the family and secured a position with the Calif. Packing Corporation. (He is still with the company as Supt. of the Dept responsible for maintaining the quality of Del Monte pineapple products.)

"School Days"

Elizabeth graduated from the University of Hawaii and sailed for the mainland to become the bride of F. Wesley Walls. Frances played second violin in the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra for two

years and graduated from Roosevelt High School as salutatorian of her class. Virginia completed her first two years of high school.

With teen-age daughters and so many lonesome men in the military service, Frank and Bertha had been somewhat anxious concerning them. Their fears proved groundless, however, and both younger daughters sailed with them to San Francisco in 1938. Frank's new station was with the Judge Advocate's Office at the Presidio of San Francisco. For the first time, the family lived on a military reservation and enjoyed a million-dollar view of the Golden Gate and Bay Bridges and Treasure Island which served as site of the Golden Gate Exposition.

"God Bless America"

Just prior to World War II, Frank was ordered to duty under his reserve commission as Captain, at Fort Lewis Wash. For a year they enjoyed living in a woodland home a few miles from Ft. Lewis. Then on to Seattle for a tour of duty and the necessity of buying a home to have a place to live. Here their two daughters were attending Seattle Pacific College, Frances graduating in 1942 with a music major and Virginia turning to nurses training at Swedish Hospital after two years at S. P. C.

"Home On The Range"

Next assignment was to Pasco, Wash. where a new installation, Pasco Molding & Reconsignment Point, was being activated under the direction of the Chief of Transportation. After Frank spent a few months living in the B. O. Q., Bertha joined him, and they lived in nearby Kennewick for the two years Frank was Adjutant and Acting Executive--and a few times the Commanding Officer--of the post.

Because of his service at Pasco, Frank--now Major Pickering--was ordered to Salt Lake City in 1944 as Adjutant of the Ninth Transportation Zone, comprising the eight Western States. They found an apartment at 792 East Second North Ave. Figuring it was only about 8 blocks from the office, Frank set out to walk there to see it. Before he reached it he was painfully aware that blocks in Salt Lake City were longer than most city blocks! The stay in Salt Lake City was marked by hospitalization of both of them; a cloud burst and flood; a close-up view of Mormans; worship with the Methodists; and frequent dining at the Hotel Utah. Frank received the Army Commendation Medal for conspicuous service while at Pasco in establishing a smooth-running and well-organized administrative section of the Headquarters under difficult circumstances due, in part, to changing personnel.

By July 1946 they were back at the Presidio of San Francisco, Frank being the Administrative Officer of the Transportation Section of Sixth Army Headquarters. Here they had the unique experience of living in a 50-block area of identical apartments, so much alike Frank found it necessary to count the buildings in his block, in order to locate the proper door.

"Now the Day is Over"

In October 1947, after spending several months in Letterman Army Hospital, Frank was relieved from duty under his reserve commission as a Lieut. Colonel and reverted to Chief Warrant Officer and retired Dec. 31, 1947, after more than 37 years of service in the Army. Later under new legislation he was raised in rank to Major. After retiring they spent some time in traveling, making Seattle their home until 1950, when, due to reasons of health they moved to Upland, California, purchasing a home at 987 Mesa Court.

During these later years they have enjoyed wonderful fellowship with the people of the Ontario Free Methodist Church, and have found choice people who have proved friends indeed and in truth.

"Perfect Day"