

Notes from the Flight Deck #29  
by  
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On the first of February I boarded an early flight out of Harrisburg and landed in Mexico City at 12:30PM local time. Our Deputy to Mexico, Sister Dalia Whitfield, met me and Worthy Grand Organist, Brother Charlie Chandler, who traveled on another airline, and had us driven to our hotel. Worthy Grand Adah, Sister Amy Wehmeier arrived a little later and our Deputy directed us to a very nice restaurant close to our hotel where we were joined by 12 members of Aztec Chapter No. 2 U.D. and Mexico Chapter No. 9 U.D. and treated us to a true Mexican dinner.

The following morning we loaded into a van and were driven to the Shriner's Hospital in Mexico City. What a beautiful and modern facility it is. Our tour guide led us through the entire building and we had the pleasure of talking to several of the young patients and their parents. It was very impressive to see the work that is being performed by the doctors and staff to assist in changing the lives of these young patients who were so upbeat and thankful for the chance to lead a better life. In the afternoon our hosts from the two chapters took us to a park and museum in the center of Mexico City where we saw an Aztec pyramid dating back to 300 BC. After that we were whisked off to a very nice restaurant for a late lunch after which I returned to our hotel and spent a few hours examining the minute books and cash books of the two chapters. On February 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10:30 AM I attended a special meeting of Aztec No. 2 and was impressed with their ritualistic work as it was all done from memory and although it was in Spanish, it was easy to follow. The conductress did an excellent job with introductions and even pronounced all our names correctly. After the meeting, we were treated to an excellent meal all prepared by the members. We returned to our hotel at 4:00 and rested until 5:30. We were driven to the Mexico City Opera House where the Mexico City Philharmonic Orchestra was performing after which our hosts treated us to a late night meal and cocktails as a parting gift.

The next morning I flew back home and landed at Middletown at 11:30 in the evening and was greeted by 2 inches of snow and ice on my car which I had to remove before returning to Elizabethtown. After resting for 3 days, Mari and I drove to Montreal, Canada for the annual Can-Am Weekend where all the New England States and the 4 Eastern Provinces of Canada have a great weekend of fun and fellowship. We arrived on February 9<sup>th</sup> and in the evening we attended the get-together buffet dinner and renewed many old friendship. The morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> 160 of us took busses to visit the Shriners' hospital in Montreal. It is only 3 years old and is attached to the McGill University and Victoria Hospitals. After a tour of the facilities, we were treated to a complimentary breakfast in the hospital. In the afternoon we attended a special meeting during which two new members were initiated and the ritualistic work was done by Grand Officers from all the Grand Chapters represented. In the evening we attended the formal

banquet followed by short greetings. Sister Marianne Shenefelt, RWAGM announced her 2018-2021 appointments from the 6 New England States and the Provinces of Nova Scotia & P.E.I., New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario. More than 45 appointees were present and introduced. The following morning we left Canada and returned to Elizabethtown.

On February 22<sup>nd</sup> we attended our own chapter meeting, Rainbow Chapter 517 and then on the 24<sup>th</sup> we drove to the Holiday Inn in Grantville for Grand Conductress, Sister Orpha Kemmler's Club Luncheon which was attended by 270 members and guests who were treated to a good meal and fun time.

March started off with the Central Village Festival on the 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Masonic Village in Elizabethtown. I wasn't able to stay for the luncheon because my daughter and grandson were with us for the weekend and we hadn't seen them for almost a year. On March 10<sup>th</sup> Mari and I drove to State College for AGM, Sister Sandy Berkey's Club Luncheon at the Penn State Conference Center. There was good attendance of members and PGM Cheryl Wilson did a fine job as toastmaster. The following Saturday, March 17<sup>th</sup> Mari and I again drove to the Holiday Inn in Grantville for the PA Service Dogs Auction and Luncheon. I bid on and won a Barclay Masonic wrist watch and Mari bid on and won a lovely Ducks Unlimited Framed print. The day was a great success and raised several thousand dollars for the Service Dog project. The next day we packed up our car and drove to the International Headquarters for the RW Grand Trustees Board Meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. The Grand Trustees in 2017 had started and approved the formation of a separate entity called the Perry Belmont House Foundation for the restoration, maintenance and upkeep of the International Headquarters and had applied to the IRS for a 501©3 tax exempt status. That approval was granted just a few days prior to this meeting. It is a big win for the R.W. Grand Trustees and for General Grand Chapter to help support the very large expense of maintaining our OES office in Washington, DC.

Mari and I left DC. on Wednesday, the 21<sup>st</sup> in a heavy snowstorm. It was one of the easiest drives out of DC that I have ever experienced as there was almost no other moving traffic in downtown Washington. We were southbound to attend Louisiana's Grand Chapter and we soon got out of the snow storm traveling south on Interstate 81. We arrived in Baton Rouge on March 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Crown Plaza Hotel where the Grand Chapter was held. I attended the ESTARL service on Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup>. The Baptist minister who had been an ESTARL recipient gave an excellent sermon on the history of the Gospel of John in the New Testament. In the evening we attended the banquet honoring Louisiana's GGCCMs and Mari was invited by the WGM to give the response after the committee members had been introduced. The informal opening session began at 5PM on the 26<sup>th</sup> and all introductions were well done by the conductress. That afternoon we received word that one of my PA Eagles, Sister Sallie Prihode had passed away and her Eastern Star service was to be held at 7:30 on Wednesday March 28<sup>th</sup>. Sallie was a dear friend and Mari and I decided that we would cut our Louisiana visit short and drive to White Oak, PA for her OES service and also her funeral. I attended the morning session on the 27<sup>th</sup> and after giving my formal address to the membership, Mari and I left Baton Rouge and headed north. We arrived in White Oak in the late afternoon of the 28<sup>th</sup> and in time to attend the OES Funeral Service that evening as well as Sallie's funeral service the next morning. We arrived home

on the 29<sup>th</sup> in the late afternoon and spent a couple days catching up on mail and paying bills. We enjoyed a great family get-together and dinner on Easter Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at the Filizzi's home in Columbia with 41 family members present and a good time was had by all.

Mari and I drove north to Nashua, NH on April 5<sup>th</sup> for the Original 13 States Gathering. This is an annual event hosted each year by one of the States involved. We had a nice get-together with members from many of the Original 13 States, but attendance was down from past years to less than 150 members. Never the less, we had an enjoyable weekend of fun and fellowship.

On April 14<sup>th</sup> we left home and drove out to Topeka, Kansas for their Grand Session. We arrived at the Ramada Inn at mid-afternoon on Monday the 16<sup>th</sup> after overnight stays in Springfield, Ohio and Columbia, Missouri. The Grand Chapter held a Vesper Service at 6:30 that evening and we attended. The following evening was the All Member Banquet and that was followed by the Informal Opening and all the introductions. There was a reception for all the members following the introductions. The 18<sup>th</sup> was a full and busy day with the Formal Opening at 9AM followed by the Grand Representatives Luncheon at noon. In the afternoon session the WGM and WGP had a nice program for 50 year or more members. At 4:30 Mari and I attended the Past Grands Banquet which was followed by an evening session where the Grand Officers initiated 4 new members.

The following morning we packed our luggage into our car and headed East to Ellicott City, Maryland. We arrived at the Turf Valley Resort on April 20<sup>th</sup> for the Maryland Grand Chapter Session and for a special party sponsored by Worthy Grand Electa, Sister Wilma Thompson and her husband, Jon. They had invited all General Grand Chapter Officers and Maryland's Grand Officers to a catered Crabfest. The evening was one of good fellowship and excellent food. Most of the next day was spent in renewing old friendships and getting oriented as to where the session would be held. At 5PM Mari and I along with over 300 others, joined in celebrating Sister Wilma's Honor Night with another tasty banquet. On Sunday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> I attended the Grand Chapter's Church Service at 10AM followed by the Necrology Service. At noon Mari and I attended the PAGO luncheon and in the evening we were guests at the WGMs and WGPs Banquet. The following morning I attended the ritualistic opening and then in the evening we attended the Informal Opening and went through all the introductions. On the 24<sup>th</sup> I attended the morning and afternoon sessions and Mari and I attended the Past Grands Banquet followed by the evening session which included their election of officers.

The next morning we packed our luggage, loaded into our car and drove to Farmington, Connecticut arriving at the Marriott Hotel at 7:15PM. On the 26<sup>th</sup> we got our registration packets and then we attended the Informal Opening that evening with all the introductions being done at that time. We attended the Formal Ritualistic Opening on Friday morning when MWGM, Sister Helen Westmoreland and I gave our formal addresses to the membership. There was a luncheon at noon and then we returned to the Grand Chapter room for the afternoon session and listened to the Officers' and Committee reports. Mari and I were guests at the "All Member Banquet" in the evening. Good food and good fellowship. We had a full day on Saturday, the 28<sup>th</sup>. We attended the Grand

Representatives Breakfast at 7:30 followed by the morning Grand Session when they conducted their elections. There was a luncheon at noon and in the afternoon we attended the Session where the WGM and WGP gave their farewell speeches and all the legislation was completed. We returned to the Grand Chapter room at 6:30 and watched their installation of Grand Officers for 2018-2019.

We left Connecticut the following morning and returned home for a bit of rest and catching up on mail, bills and spending time with our family members.

In the first half of May we attended the Miller/Kemmler 5<sup>th</sup> year reunion, WGM, Sister Emily McCarthy's Homecoming and PGM, Sister Barbara Adams 45<sup>th</sup> reunion, all of which were held at the Holiday Inn in Grantville and we certainly enjoyed being able to attend these events and support our Sisters and Brothers here in Pennsylvania.

Our itinerary became very busy beginning on May 13<sup>th</sup> when we loaded up our car and left for Seattle, Washington arriving there at the Days Inn near the SeaTac Airport on May 17<sup>th</sup>. The following afternoon we boarded an Alaska Airlines flight which flew us to Fairbanks, Alaska. We landed there at 10PM in broad daylight and we were met by our Deputy to Alaska, Sister Claudia Johnson and the WM of the Fairbanks Chapter, Golden Heart Chapter No. 6. Worthy Grand Ruth, Sister Judy Rutter and her husband Michael and GGCCMs Sister Shilora and Brother Bob Hadlow were also on our flight. Our escorts got our luggage loaded and got the six of us to our hotel and registered before 11PM. The morning of May 19<sup>th</sup> we were escorted on a sightseeing tour of the area with a stop at the Santa House in North Pole, AK where our group enjoyed some shopping. We also visited the big Alaska Oil Pipeline which is an engineering marvel. On the way we also enjoyed watching two moose grazing along the side of the road. That evening our group walked across the street to the Masonic Temple and attended a Special Meeting of Golden Heart Chapter No. 6, U.D. There were a total of 12 who traveled to Alaska with us for this Official visit to all five of the Alaskan Chapters. On May 20<sup>th</sup> we said our farewells to our members in Fairbanks and flew south to Anchorage where we were met by a group of members from Anchorage Chapter No. 8 and Denali Chapter No. 16. They escorted us to the Dimond Center Hotel and after we settled in, they took us to a very lovely native run restaurant where Mari and I enjoyed a fresh Salmon filet. The next morning our hosts drove us to the Native Alaskan Cultural Center where we enjoyed learning about the native cultures and the many tribes of Alaska. In the evening we attended a Special joint meeting of the two Anchorage Chapters. We enjoyed a nice meal prior to the meeting. The morning of May 22<sup>nd</sup> found us leaving Anchorage in two vans and driving to Soldatna, AK. On the way we were treated to the sight of over 50 Bald Eagles and several more moose. We took a tour of the oldest church on the Kenai Peninsula, a Russian Orthodox Church and one of the Sisters of North Star Chapter No. 17 gave us a talk on the history of the church and early settlers to the area. After getting settled into the Aspen Hotel in Soldatna, we changed into formal clothes and attended the Special Meeting of North Star Chapter as well as a very nice dinner the members made for us. We left Soldatna at 10AM on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and drove to Whittier, AK on Prince William Sound. The land approach takes you

through a 2 ½ mile long narrow railroad/highway tunnel. Whittier is a port city where Princess Cruise Lines stop for tours of the area and is on the inside passage providing opportunity for other cruise lines to stop. We also had an excellent lunch while there. We returned to Anchorage for the evening and the next morning we flew from Anchorage to Juneau, AK where we were met by 9 members of Juneau Chapter No. 7. After we got settled into the Airport Travelodge, our hosts took us on a tour down to the Mendenhall Glacier and Visitors Center. The weather was misting rain and temperature in the mid 40s in Juneau- a big change from Fairbanks, Anchorage and Soldatna where it was sunny and highs in the upper 60s each day we were in those cities. That evening we attended a nice catered dinner at the Juneau Masonic Lodge and enjoyed a casual evening of chatting with the members of the Lodge and the Chapter. On the 25<sup>th</sup> our group met with our hosts at 10 AM and were driven 9 miles down to the city of Juneau where some of our group went shopping. The rest of us took the skyway tram up Mount Roberts where we could see for many miles. We took lots of photos of the beautiful panorama of lush vegetation and scenic beauty. When we returned to the city and exited the Tram, we walked to Tracy's Crab Shop where we dined on fresh and delicious King Crab. Yummy! In the afternoon our hosts took us to the Botanical Glacier Gardens where we rode in a jitney bus through the rain forest and viewed beautiful flowers in the greenhouses. We returned to our hotel to dry off and warm up a bit before changing into formal wear and going to dinner at the Masonic Lodge @ 5:30 and another Special Meeting of Juneau Chapter #7, U.D.

May 26<sup>th</sup> found us back at the Juneau Airport where we boarded an Alaskan Airliner and returned to Seattle. I retrieved our car and we drove north on I-5 into British Columbia where we attended the Grand Chapter Session of British Columbia and the Yukon. The sessions were held in the city of Nanaimo on Vancouver Island which requires a two hour ferry ride from the mainland. We arrived at our hotel early in the afternoon of May 27<sup>th</sup> and attended their All Member Banquet that evening. I attended the Informal Opening the next morning, the Formal Opening in the afternoon as well as an evening Session when the introductions were made. The members of B.C. and Yukon were very warm and welcoming and made our short stay very pleasant.

The 29<sup>th</sup> found us back on the road and on our way back to the mainland and back into the USA. Our next Grand Chapter was in Jamestown, North Dakota arriving there on May 31<sup>st</sup> at the Gladstone Inn and a block away from the Convention Center where the sessions were held. That evening we attended the Formal Opening and introductions. This was their 124<sup>th</sup> Annual Session with the WGM's theme of the "Music of Life." On June 1<sup>st</sup> I attended the Grand Representatives' Luncheon followed by the afternoon business session and ending with their Necrology and a very nice Memorial Service. That evening they had a Western Theme Banquet and Fun Night which Mari and I attended. A good meal was enjoyed with great entertainment by a Masonic Historian who did a humorous history of Masonry and Eastern Star over the past century in North Dakota and Montana, after which we were treated to live music and dancing.

We said our farewell to North Dakota on June 2<sup>nd</sup> and drove west to Boise, Idaho where on June 5<sup>th</sup> I flew to Albany, NY, rented a car and drove to Killington, Vermont for our Official Visit to their 146<sup>th</sup> Annual Session, the "God and Country" Session. I attended the Informal Opening on the 6<sup>th</sup> as well as attending the PAGO dinner that evening. The Formal Opening was done on the afternoon of the 7<sup>th</sup> when all the introductions were made. MWGM, Sister Helen and I gave our formal addresses to the members after all the introductions were completed. June 8<sup>th</sup> started early with my attendance at the VT Secretarys' and Treasurers' Breakfast at 7:30 AM after which I attended the morning session when all the committee and elected officers' reports were given. The distinguished guest luncheon at noon was followed by a short afternoon session to finish all the business of the Grand Chapter. That evening Sister Helen and I stayed for the installation of their 2018-2019 officers.

I had an early flight out of Albany on Saturday, June 9<sup>th</sup> and returned to Boise, Idaho. Mari had stayed in Boise during my Vermont journey getting some needed rest and doing updates for me on reports for General Grand Chapter on her laptop computer. After I landed in Boise and returned to the Motel, we repacked the car and immediately left for Idaho Falls for their 116<sup>th</sup> Annual Session themed "Faith-Family-Friends." The WGM, Sister Elizabeth Hughes and WGP John Hughes are a husband and wife team and greeted us royally upon our arrival. They had Dr. Gary Lamarr, PGP and his wife Robbie waiting for our arrival and they certainly helped a great deal in getting us moved into our room and making us feel most welcome. We spent two very busy days at Idaho's Grand Session. On Sunday, June 10<sup>th</sup> we attended the ESTARL Vespers and Memorial Service in the morning, the Distinguished Guest Luncheon at noon, the Informal Opening in the afternoon where they paid tribute to the 50 year members and all the youth groups. That evening was the Formal Opening and all introductions. The next day was full with elections and reports. In the evening Mari and I attended the Past Grand Banquet where they did a fun initiation of the junior Past Grand Patron.

On June 12<sup>th</sup> we left Idaho Falls and continued on our journey to Billings, Montana for the 129<sup>th</sup> "Harmony of Friendship" Session of Montana's Grand Chapter which was held at the Red Lion Inn and Conference Center. On the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup> Mari and I attended a Vesper Service which was followed by the ESTARL Program. On the 14<sup>th</sup> the Grand Chapter officially began with an informal opening of a tribute to our flags ceremony and introducing the youth organizations and all the Masonic bodies as well as both the York and Scottish Rites. The Grand Master of Masons AF&AM of Montana gave a very supportive speech of Eastern Star. In the evening we attended the Formal Opening and all other introductions were made. I attended the morning and afternoon Session on the 15<sup>th</sup> and we thanked the members for their attention and courtesies given to us during our official visit.

We left Billings on June 16<sup>th</sup> and traveled west to Pendleton, Oregon for our Official Visit to the 129<sup>th</sup> "Pathfinders' Rendezvous" when we arrived at the Oxford Inn. All the sessions and dinners were held at the Pendleton Conference Center which was about a mile from the hotel and required shuttle service back and forth. The evening of June 17<sup>th</sup> we attended their All

Members Banquet which was a gala affair with many of the members in period costumes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We enjoyed a good meal and after that we were entertained by a husband and wife playing period music and also giving us the history of the Oregon Trail of which Pendleton was one of the original stop-overs along the way. The next two days were filled with the usual Grand Chapter business. The morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> they did a very impressive cavalcade of flags with tributes to all the flags. WGM Gloria Varner gave Sister Helen and me the honor of signing her Bible as well as WGP, Jay Saatkemps' Bible which he had inherited from PMWGM, Dorothy Dewing's family. I will always consider that as a very special honor.

On the morning of June 20<sup>th</sup> Mari and I packed all our luggage into our car and drove East for Elizabethtown, arriving home on the evening of 5 June 23<sup>rd</sup>. We had been away for 42 straight days and we were a pair of road weary folks. We drove during that period 9,755 miles and that doesn't count the flying miles to Alaska or Vermont. We will get to spend some time with our families and then get ready for our next adventure. We will continue to spread the word and "Keep Flying High for OES."