

THE FLIGHT OF THE BLACKBIRD

On the morning of August 15, 1927, there was a stir and excitement in the homes of Dr. V. V. Bacon, Mrs . Josephine McCormach and Miss Elizabeth Stannard for they, together with Miss Nora Bacon of Ann Arbor, Michigan, were preparing to start on a tour of the coast.

Doctor had built a wardrobe on the side of the car into which was hung on coat hangers a suit of glad rags for each of the party, for it developed later that each one was hoping to make a hit before returning home. On the other side of the little Chev was a tall food box on top of which was tied a suit case for eats not able to be held by the box . In the tonneau was bedding and a tent and tied on behind was a duffle bag filled with more bedding and everything that would not go any place else. On the bumpers was a double spring bed folded, and on one step was a cot rolled in rubber. The personal effects of each were in separate bags of various descriptions, the only requirement of the bag being that it be small enough to set in its allotted space. Stannards bag, the ladies' dress shoes, Mac's dress hat, Doctor's two hats, and other accessories went into a box which had been built into the car and occupied one third of the back seat. On this box sat Mac's week-end bag and Miss Bacon's bag, also flack light, vacuum bottle, maps, extra wraps, and sometimes surplus food. Doctor's emergency kit, which had been transformed into an overnight bag, sat under his feet.

Thus equipped, the blackbird spread her striped wings about 6:50 a.m. at the Stannard home and then went for Mrs. McCormach who had been up since 3:00 a.m. and sitting on the front doorstep since 5:30, eager and ready to begin the trip. When we left there at 7:20, the meter showed that the blackbird had already fluttered

over 34,300 miles.

The day was "brite and fare", getting hotter and hotter. At Sprague we rested five minutes, but were on our way by 8:55 passing through Ritzville and Lind by 10:30. We saw five combines at work along the road. In another hour we had dinner at Connell Hotel, the "Heart of the Columbia Basin", and got our fifty cents worth, bread pudding and all. The blackbird was resting under some poplars, about the only shade trees in the town. The dust was thick and we were grateful for a good highway.

We arrived at Pasco at 1:50 and stopped to get cold refreshments, Doctor having his eversatisfying Chocolate Sundae. Then a flat tire was discovered, and while a garage man made repairs, the women walked the streets to buy postcards, films, and buns. The temperature was reported to be 104, but the thermometer must have been hanging in the cellar. There I met Mr. and Mrs. Windle enroute to Seattle. By 3:05 we were off, crossing the Columbia on a bridge to Kennewick. Soon we left the irrigated country and went through the desert of Washington seeing only sage brush and a few deserted cabins of disappointed homesteaders. The road was freshly graveled, the wind was from the rear, and the little car sweat and boiled. We were glad to see the Columbia again and cross on a ferry to Umatilla where we found the wonderful Columbia Highway at 5:20 p.m.

For about ten miles we traveled through a narrow stretch of irrigated land, and then the only interest would be the everchanging banks of the river.

We arrived at Arlington at 7:00 p.m., bought food and drove back to the camp where the tent was pitched. After eating the chicken-wick Helen Solomon had baked for us, we finished making beds, and were all asleep by ten o'clock. It was Miss Bacon's first experience sleeping outdoors. The camp was crowded, and the men in the next

tent woke early, so that our women were awakened, and had an early breakfast. The camp was in a narrow gulch between two railroad tracks, and was provided with a good community kitchen and tables, showers, and electric lights. Fairsized locust trees were growing and grass had been planted, but was pretty well tramped out. Arlington marks the junction of the Columbia Highway and a road to California.

By 7:25 a.m. we were on the road. We passed the DeChutes River with its water wheels, saw Mary's Hill with the imposing white buildings that Queen Maire come to dedicate as a museum. Mitchell tunnel through solid rock claimed our admiration and the beautiful views of the river were changing too fast to be even mentioned. We wondered at the work that had been done to make the locks in the river possible, which work will probably be of little future use as trucking on the highway supersedes shipping by boat. We arrived at the Dalles at 9:45 and at Hood River at 11:15. After finding a very good lunch at the Apple Blossom, we started an hitherto unplanned sidetrip up Hood River to the snow line. The day was hot, and we stopped to cool the engine at several stations where the aides were enthusiastically garrulous over the scenery ahead. Mount Hood was visible all of the way to Cloud Cap Inn. The party indulged in a snow fight. We watched four boys climbing the mountain without a guide, and all were anxious for their safety because of the recent disaster to Portland mountaineers who had met catastrophe over the same trail. When we went back down the mountain over the splendid road made by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, we could see Mount Adams all the way above the orchards. We arrived back in Hood River at 5:20 p.m. and hurried toward Portland. At Cascade about 7:30 we stopped for dinner, but the dining rooms were so hot, we bought ice cream and drove away. Although it was getting dusk we could see Multnomah Falls to which we walked, and admired the roadhouse which has been built at the road. It was after dark when we reached Crown Point, but we went through the

building if we did have to miss the view. The beautiful million dollar Vista House on Crown Point was ablaze with lights as well as the drive around it, but we missed the Vista, which from former experiences we knew to be more beautiful than the House, and we missed the thrill of the long pull up there with its hairpin curves.

We debated whether to drive into Portland or not but as Miss Bacon was anxious to visit with a cousin, we decided to go on. We arrived in Portland at 9:30 p.m. and tried to phone Mr. Huff, the cousin, from the drug store. Portland has no municipal auto camp and the nearest one was five miles away, and so we drove five miles the other way to the Y's. Portland was in the throes of an "unusual" heat, the thermometer had registered 96° that day, and we were happy to have a cool room with two big windows and four single beds. Doctor was at the Y.M. which occupies the other side of the same building as the Y.W. The car was in a garage half a block away where it was whisked to the third floor in an elevator. Our delicious breakfast was secured for a pittance in the cafeteria in the basement of the Y.M. In the morning we dressed in citizens' clothes, Mr. and Miss Bacon went out to Mr. Huff's house and found the family had gone to Seaside and the letter heralding our coming was still in the mail box. Mac and Susie window shopped, took in the big stores and the market, and Mac went to a wholesale house. An early lunch at the Y.W. cafeteria and a quick change into traveler's togs and we were off at 12:30. First we went to a doctor's home, a classmate of Dr. Bacon's who was ill, and doctor had a pleasant call. We left Portland at 1:30.

There were small fires in the Olympics which prevented our seeing any snow clad mountains, but the sun was shining and both banks of the Columbia were visible as we rolled along toward the sea. We arrived at Rainier at 3:45 p.m. and then we began to get cold. The women wrapped themselves in blankets before reaching Astoria at 6:30.

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The road here was lined with Scotch broom. We arrived at Seaside at 7:15 and found the Huff Cottage full of visitors and the cabins in the auto camp all rented. We finally found a back yard cottage, seemingly characteristic of the town, and cooked dinner. Afterwards we drove to the ocean. The way was canopied overhead with electric lights and the little street was ablaze with curio shops and places to eat. At the ocean was a monument marking the end of the Lewis and Clark Trail beyond which were benches where one could watch "the ceaseless mighty ocean roll." Not satisfied with this, our party walked the sands of the beach and dipped our fingers in the limitless waste of water. Then we went into the Natatorium to watch them bathe and dive in warm ocean water.

The next morning all but Susie went to the ocean while she got breakfast, hooked our bed to the wall, and did some washing. All got the same inspiration for cleanliness and thereafter we carried wet clothes until Sunday. We got off for Cannon Beach by 9:40. It was so named because a cannon drifted onto that beach. This beach was not commercialized as Seaside is, and it was beautiful with its steep banks and the tall rocks projecting from the ocean. People drove the cars onto the beach. Some were digging for clams, others getting shells and sea weeds. Though the sky was gloomy, we were intoxicated with the tang of the sea in the air, and even

"Nora clambered o'er the rocks
And didn't care who saw her socks."

The incoming tide finally drove us off the beach and we traveled through the wooded road back to Seaside where we bought lunches -- clam chowder for those who had not yet tasted enough of the ocean. A knock had developed in the car which could not be located at the garage. It was 2:00 p.m. before we were on our way. The lateness of the hour allowed us to call for the mail but none was there.

When we reached Astoria, the women went through a salmon cannery, while doctor hunted the knock. Then he took us to the pretty new Astoria Hotel while he hunted the knock for another half hour without finding it. Enroute to Rainier we bought honey made from wild flowers. At seven o'clock we ferried from Rainier to Long View. The city auto camp is much advertised along the routes and deservedly for it is spaciouly spread out beneath huge oaks and boasts a screened community dining room, kitchen and laundry, showers, cabins, and garages, and community recreation room with a fireplace. Perhaps the grounds were too spacious for we complained of the distance of our cabin to the kitchens and dressing rooms. After a dinner cooked in camp we drove to the city to get aspirin for the doctor's neuralgia contracted in the cold of Seaside; it was marvelous aspirin for it cured him just from being in his pocket. We found a city laid out on the most approved plans and the buildings all new, for the place is not more than eight years old.

The oatmeal for breakfast was enlivened by hot cakes and honey and thereafter no meal on the trip was complete without honey. It took two hours every morning for us to dress, cook, and pack and be on our way. The Long Bell Lumber Company allows visitors only at 9:15 a.m. By rushing we caught up with the guide and his large party who were being conducted through the saw mill. It is perhaps the largest saw mill in the world and was that day loading three ocean steamers. It took until 10:45 to go through the mill and every minute we were fascinated with the enormous power plants and furnaces, with the precaution against fire, with the many huge saws, the drying ovens, the automatic sorting of boards and the whole wonderful system.

Another forty-five minutes was used in shopping and we were off north at 11:30. As it was raining we decided to eat in the grand

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stand of a ball park at 12:30 but an officious excited, red-headed cop chased us out. A few miles beyond, we found a free picnic ground in front of a dance hall with tables under trees and good water piped there. The outstanding feature of the scenery was the signs of chicken dinners posted every half mile or nearer. We arrived at the State Capitol at 4:05 and again we rushed to get in as they issue no permits after four. But doctor ran into the Insurance Building for the permit and we were conducted through the building which, the guide tried to tell us, cost the taxpayers nothing. The marbles are beautiful being from Alaska, France, and Germany. The furniture is artistic almost without exception but it is unfortunate that too high prices were paid. The building might have had a beautiful sweep of lawn to the Sound, but the new Temple of Justice is immediately across the road in front; across the road to the left is the new Insurance Building and on the other side is to be the Governor's home. With fifty-five acres at their disposal it does seem as if there might have been a little landscaping done and that our State House could have had an imposing approach to the stately columns of its porches. Again we were disappointed when we called for mail. We past the old State House without stopping to see our friends and arrived at Tacoma at 6:10 p.m. An oil company had new cabins in the rear, with graveled grounds and flowers. After a fish dinner in our cabin, we set up Miss Bacon's cot, fought mosquitoes and retired early. So ended the fifth day.

The next morning the sun was reported to be shining at Paradise Valley which we reached by 12:30. Mt. Rainier was not visible until after we had passed Longmire Spring. Then we had snow clad mountains on both sides of us. We started to eat lunch in the shade near the Inn but were driven out to the free auto camp below. There cookstoves and tables were provided, electric lights, a laundry, and shower baths, a surprising amount of free civilization in the midst of nature

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ruggedness.. We ate scraps for lunch and too much of them. That coupled with the high altitude made us all lazy. The air was cool but the sun hot and we dried the laundry. We hunted a place to camp for an hour, then decided not to stay so high, and started for the Inn. Here we parked the car and went up the Skyline Trail; some went far enough to see Mt. Adams and many other high peaks above the clouds. Mrs. MacCormach was siezed with a longing to actually touch a glacier and so she struck off down, down a hill, without a trail until she finally came to signs marked "Danger", and was forced to forego her ambition, We met at the car about 6:00 p.m. and decided to camp in Paradise Valley. All camping conveniences were taken but a party shared their stove and table. Susie was too tired to walk back to the lecture at the recreation hall, and so Mac had to be disappointed again, for the tent was attached to the car. After dinner we sat around the camp fire listening to tales of recent travels in Alaska from the people whose camp we shared and hearing songs from other circles around fires. The bacon and honey were tied in a sack high in one of the stunted trees lest the bears disturb our provisions. The night was so cold that Mac did not sleep at all, and the hot stone at Miss Bacon's feet only partially promoted slumber. I think they were afraid of the bears.

At day break Dr's voice was heard calling , "See the sun touching the top of Mt. Rainier," and soon the camp was alive. The bears had been down and tipped over the garbage cans but had not discovered our bacon and precious honey. Breakfast over and packing done, Doctor was "durned tired," but "by golly" the experience was worth the effort. At the office of the park naturalist were specimens of thirty varieties of wild flowers then in bloom. Valerian, commonly called "garden heliotrope

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and buttercups were everywhere in the natural meadows. We bought picture cards and started on our downward trip at 9:30 a.m.

On the steep grade we were informed by a passing motorist that the brakes were burning, and thereafter the tin pail tied in the very rear contained water. We stopped at Narada Falls where the little stream falls 168 feet. In order to see them, we went down natural steps formed from the roots of pines. The next stop was at Nisqually Glacier. As the glacier has receded one-half a mile we had to walk over boulders and pebbles back to the ice. What looked like black rock from the road proved to be dirty ice with clear blue ice caves below. Mac and Susie were not satisfied until they had gone beyond the danger signals and actually touched the ice. Then a sudden realization of what it might mean if one of those boulders should roll or a chunk of ice break off made them retreat in a panic. At Longmire cool drinks were enjoyed on the porch where we drank in, along with the sodas, a last view of Mount Rainier "The Mountain that was God."

At Tacoma we drove through the business portion and saw the Stadium High School.

We arrived in Seattle on Sunday at 5:10 p.m. We saw the totem pole, curiosity shop, and the docks, and tried to get in connection with our friends. Failing in this, we started camp hunting and finally located at the dirty "D & M" camp on the Bothell Road about four miles out of town. A good chicken dinner at the near by inn was almost spoiled by the cook's account of her hospital experiences. In the morning, we each dressed in our glad rags for the one time on the trip and sought our friends; Susie lunched with Adelaide, Mac with her cousin, and Doctor looked up the widows of Seattle. We all met at Frederick Nelson's big

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store, leaving for camp at 2:00. We were packed and started for home by 3:15.

Snoqualmie Falls is now used by the Puget Sound Power and Light Company but was dry then. In the spring 17,000 cubic feet of water passes over the falls which are 272 feet high. Doctor paid his bet here in drinks of grape sodas and by 5:00 we were on our way, though Mac had not secured the Kodak view desired. I wonder why.

We shopped at North Bend. "Old Si" still sleeps on the mountain top. We arrived at Camp Mason twelve miles east of North Bend at 6:50 p.m. It is a woodsy camp facing Mr. McClellan on Snoqualmie River. The cabins were half a block apart and the meadow between was seeded to grass. Miss Bacon cooked the steak and we had the best meal on the trip. In the morning there was heavy dew with fog.

We were off at 8:00 and arrived at Summit at 9:30. Here we had refreshments, kodaked, and climbed the steps of the observatory. Going down we traveled along Lake Keechelus for miles. We saw Donkey engines snaking logs out of the woods, soon to spoil the beauty of this drive. At the swiftly flowing Kaches River Miss Bacon gathered pretty stones. After crossing the Cle Elum River we commenced to find dust.

We arrived at Cle Elum at 11:30. An honest garage man greased all the spindles, took off wheels, tightened them, the brakes, and the steering wheel all for 75 cents. We found delicious home cooking at the "Auto Rest". The town has many new business blocks facing the old ones, and mines were on the outskirts. As they were paving Main Street we had the first detour of the trip. A few miles out of Cle Elum we stopped at the Masterson Ranch where Miss Bacon was allowed to meet an old time friend of her brother De Witt.

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We crossed Tennenaway River. As we ascended Blewett Pass, at a point prepared by rangers, we got out to see a panoramic view of the Cascades whose skyline might have been traced by a compass excepting for hills in the rear which interrupted the completeness of the circle. The party rested at the top of Blewett Pass and enjoyed the log inn. Going down Doctor had Mac sit in front to help drive by watching the outside wheel though he was surprised to find the grade widened. Ingall Creek Lodge was at the foot of Blewett Pass.

We passed through Cashmere Valley with its lovely yards and flowers and then drove on to Wenatchee with its setting of hills and the high mountains to the north. Each street seemed to end in an orchard. We arrived at 5:00 p.m. and bought groceries for dinner and had ice cream. They park two deep on Main Street. After crossing the Columbia River we were soon into the sage brush country. We saw Lincoln Rock across the river. The six mile hill up Pine Canyon brought us to the wheat country on a level plateau and we arrived in Waterville at 7:10 p.m.

The crowded camp was filled, and so we were forced to use the baggage room of the railroad station which had been furnished in crude fashion. We were assured that no train was due to arrive for three days. It seems that the city of Waterville built and owns the six mile railroad which connects with the mail line at Douglas. It is still used to haul coal and oil into the town, and the people are proud of their possession. After a feast on Wenatchee peaches and cream, we looked up another widow, Mrs. Howe. She was not at home but her daughter, the county clerk talked of her trip to Banff. In the night our dreams of being corpses in the baggage room were interrupted by terrific lightning and rain with a fire to add to the excitement. A barn on the edge of town had

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been struck and the fire sirens and lurid flames kept us awake. Nevertheless we were up at 6:15 and the women were ready and had packed all the bedding by 8:05 but we did not start until 9:00 a.m.

We passed by level fields of wheat and much summer fallow. We could see for miles in all directions and everywhere the farms were well improved. In twenty miles, we saw our first Coulee. Dry Falls attracted us to detour two miles. A sign board told us that

"During the ice age a mighty river 50 feet deep at brink fell 400 feet into the basin below eroding the gorge as you see it, and when the ice sheet receded these falls were left dry." Another sign read

"Dry Falls	400 feet high	1.5 Mi. wide
Victoria	256 " "	1 Mi. wide
Niagra	160 " "	.25 Mi. wide

We went back to the main road and drove to Coulee City by 11:30. There we bought materials for lunch and ate under locust trees on green grass in the tourists camp. The cabin here seemed to be old hay sheds that had been converted into windowless huts. After lunch we drove back past Dry Falls and ten miles to the end of the road. Enroute we found many shell fossils. To see the fossil trees required an hours time more and a boat, and so some of the party did not want to go. The old man who runs a resort here showed us agates, crystals, and petrified wood found in the Coulees. He has home-steaded in the bed of the old river for 17 years and now has a patch of alfalfa with cows.

A short stop at Davenport for ice cream at 4:30 was our only interruption, and we were within the limits of Spokane by 6:15 p.m. the end of a successful trip of 1430 miles in 10 days.