

This is a copy of my journal, written while on a trip to New Zealand in 1994. It is not meant to be grammatically correct, for when traveling, one writes hastily and does not always form proper sentences, etc. I had arranged the trip for myself and my long time friends, Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur VanDeventer, we flew from Los Angeles, California to Auckland, New Zealand on Quantas Airlines. I had arranged for hotel on arrival, for I wanted my friends to feel sure they had accommodations. When I travel alone, I always secure my hotel when I arrive at an airport. This trip started just 6 days after we had experienced a 6.6 earthquake in Southern California, were still feeling aftershocks.

### NEW ZEALAND

My friends Wilbur and Jessie VanDeventer arrived in Los Angeles, from their winter home in Florida on Sunday morning, January 30. My daughter Mary Lynn and I drove down and picked them up, then returned to Thousand Oaks where they stayed at my home. Our flight to Auckland, New Zealand was scheduled at 8:15 p.m. on Monday, January 31, so about 5:00 p.m. Mary Lynn and Steve drove all of us to LAX airport. We went down along Pacific Coast Highway, so Jessie and Wilbur could enjoy that scenic ride, and also the freeway is terribly crowded at this time of day. Arrived about 6:20 p.m., check-in for our flight was in progress at Quantas desk, our bags were taken, and tickets verified. We boarded our flight, and took off about 8:30 p.m., the plane was very full. It is a very long flight, but I slept some during the night, felt o.k. on arrival in Auckland. Our baggage arrived o.k., there was not much trouble getting through immigration, no customs or passport problems. We found the money-change window, I changed \$200 and received 344.40 New Zealand dollars (ND). A US dollar is worth 1.58 ND today. We had planned on renting a car, and staying in motels while traveling through both north, and south islands, but Wilbur saw the desk advertising rental of motor homes (RV's), and decided to do that. He and Jessie had had motor homes, and traveled a lot in U S A in them. Now he rented one for 16 days, we could get it day after tomorrow. A shuttle van was provided to take us to the Manukau Motor Lodge, the lodging reserved, it was not far from the airport, 30ND for the three of us to drive there. It was a very clean, quite new lodging, we had a 2 level, kitchenette type suite, with the bedrooms upstairs. On street level were a living room with sofa, chairs, TV, small table and 4 chairs, a stove, refrigerator, dishes, coffee pot and packets of tea and coffee. It was very nice. There was a swim pool outside, a spa and sauna. After getting settled, Jess and I had a swim, then got in the hot spa. The weather was cloudy and cool, about 70 F, but warmed up after the sun came out later in the afternoon.

There was a large, indoor shopping mall about 2 blocks away, we walked there, observed people, style of dress (noted many Maori tribal people wearing a mu-mu), noted some people were barefoot – we did not see any blacks. We ate in one of the many restaurants, returned to our motel. I had previously written to a nephew of my neighbor, who lived in Auckland, saying I would get in touch with him on our arrival. He, Bruce Wallace, stopped at our lodging, in late afternoon, and spent an hour giving us directions to various areas of interest, where we could travel in the RV. He was a very nice young man, with a very “English” style of speech, which we heard constantly while in the mall. He invited us to his

home for Chinese food tomorrow evening, but we declined, both he and his wife work, are busy people, I did not want to bother them, but thanked him. In the evening Jess, Wilbur and I played cards (which is our usual pastime, when we would visit at each other's homes in past years), each had a glass of wine, then retired.

### THURSDAY FEBRUARY 3

Slept very well, did my floor exercises after arising, would have had an early a.m. swim, as is my custom at home, but pool was still locked. We made our breakfast, had good toast, coffee, banana and milk. The air was cool, lot's of grey sky, a light jacket felt good. We had arranged to take a ½ day tour of Auckland today, I have my Minolta camera to take slides, also have a disposable one for prints, have my recorder to talk into and make audio tapes. I usually do this on my world travels. The van driver's name was Ken, a native of Auckland, he was very good and gave much information. The name for a highway here is "motorway", driver of autos sits on right hand side of the car, the flow of traffic is different than in USA. Auckland is built on 19 old volcanos, the popular belief, terrain is very hilly, it is almost surrounded by shoreline, with many beaches, marinas and ferry crossings to the business area. Victoria mountain, in the city, is a very high area, with beautiful views of houses below, water and ferries in the distance. On the other side of a residential area is Mt. Eden, from which one got a beautiful view of houses below. The wind was blowing very strong while we were up there, was heard on my recorder. We stopped in the downtown area of this modern city, where ocean going sailboats were docked along a pier, they have just finished an around the world race – the sponsor's name "Heineken beer" was on one. The boats are so big!!! One of the sailboats was permanently set up high, above the streets, and on display for all to see. Auckland is called "The City Of Sails", there are marinas all over.

The business district has many new high skyscrapers, also the old style Victorian buildings, which are being preserved. England governed New Zealand for many, many years, houses are of the Victorian style, also some business places. Most women seen were wearing skirts, or dresses, it reminded me of America about 25 years ago. Many brown-skinned people were in evidence, descendents of the Maori tribe, which occupied the country before the British conquered it about 160 years ago. Many unusual (to us) trees seen, beautiful flowers all over in yards, many parks and beaches throughout the city. The seasons here "down under the equator" are opposite to U.S., it is summer now. There is never freezing temperature here, except in mountains of the south island, which are very high. We returned to our lodging at 1:00 p.m., then walked to the restaurant "Hungry Horse", 2 blocks away, had roast lamb lunch – very good! Tim Fraser, the young man I met in California, while I was on a tour, called while we were out, would call back. I wrote some post-cards, mailed them when we walked out later to a grocery store. They had pumpkin soup, ready to take out, I bought some for evening meal. It was raining lightly, as we walked from the store. Then I made another phone call, that I had promised to do for a friend, Bob Sankovich. He had another musician friend living in Auckland, who had recent heart attack; the man, John Horn, was out of the hospital now and feeling better, but weak; talked to his wife, then him. Glad I could contact him and bring the message back to Bob at home.

In the evening, after our dinner of pumpkin soup and good bread (the soup was so delicious) we played Springfield rummy, had a glass of white wine. I was winner, \$1.45. About 8:30 p.m., as Web and Jess were about to retire, a phone call came from Tim Fraser, he had just finished his work as a security guard. I invited him to stop for a short visit, as we leave here tomorrow morning. He arrived just before 9:00 p.m., we had good conversation for an hour. He is a little heavier than I remembered him, not fat, nice appearing. He is learning Holistic medicine and acupuncture at present, and hopes to become established in this field. He is not yet married, his family is thinking seriously of moving to southern Ireland, is undecided if he will follow. It was a nice chat. After that, I retired. Now I have made contact with the three persons I planned to call, when in Auckland.

#### **FRIDAY FEBRUARY 4**

Had a good sleep! Body is doing fine. Breakfast, of food we bought at the store yesterday, was raisin bran, banana, toast, milk, coffee. After we had showered and dressed, we packed bags, paid the telephone use bill of 3.40 ND, and were picked up by the shuttle van to pick up the RV. The business is called the Maui Company, they rent the RV's. It took about 50 minutes before all arrangements, papers signed, etc., were done, then we got our camper and information, maps, camp sites. We were given directions to get out of Auckland and head north (Auckland is on the north island) but Wilbur made a wrong turn and we had to come back to starting point. Finally, we got onto Route 12, and then Rt. 1, the highway we will follow to the tip of north island. The camper has an upper double bed, a ladder to get up there where I will sleep, and table and benches make into a double bed on lower level, where Jess and Wilbur will sleep. It took a while for Wilbur to get used to driving on the left side of the road, different from the U.S. He has done a lot of motor home driving, in past years. Auckland spreads out very far, has pretty, neat homes, bungalows with fences around, pretty yards, and a LOT of flowers everywhere. After Auckland, the land was hilly, often thickly wooded, then some was cleared and we would see cattle or sheep grazing there. Everything was green, they have plenty rain. Sometimes huge fern trees, called punga, were amongst the pines and other kinds of trees. The road often edged the backwater areas from a bay, in the Pacific ocean.

We stopped at the town of Wangerei, bought groceries at a store, drove on to Kamo where we found a campground, just off the highway. This would be our first night in the motorhome! There was a pool at this facility, and I took a swim after getting settled. We ate a simple meal, with hot dogs, arranged our possessions in closet and cupboards, and played cards again. I put my large suitcase up on the double bed, where I could leave it open and easily get items out of it;. There was no floor space to leave it down below. There is a cupboard, next to the upper bed, and I leave small personal items in it. If I had known we would be traveling in a camper, instead of staying at motels, I would have packed differently and brought a duffel-type bag. The upper bed is not easy to get into, for the ladder is way at one side, and there's nothing to hold onto when ascending. I found I could step onto a ledge, then put one foot on edge of stove, and pull up into the bed that way. We laughed about my "ascent" to my bed.

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**SATURDAY FEBRUARY 5**

I slept very well until about 4:30 a.m., the bed was comfortable, fell back asleep again for awhile. Breakfast was cereal, milk, banana, coffee. Jessie usually only has coffee in the morning, sometime a piece of toast. We decided to do very little cooking on this trip, making everything simple, and eating prepared foods or in restaurants. Leaving the campground we went south on Route 1, to go back to Wangerei Falls, which we had read about. Got mixed up a bit, had to ask directions a couple of times, but then found the Falls. A river drops over a high break in rocks and makes a beautiful sight, park-like grounds surround the area. We took pictures, enjoyed walking around, then it was back on Route 1 again, heading north. The countryside was giant rolling hills, some cleared with cattle grazing, some heavily forested. The huge fern tree "punga" grew amongst many other kinds, even some flowering trees. There were wild flowers alongside the highway in places, flowers seen in yards, there was beauty everywhere. The paved road was good, but very twisty at times, and cars traveled very fast. We stopped once to buy fresh vegetables at a roadside stand, saw these frequently, bought green peppers (capsicum), corn, potatoes, cucumber, a melon and "kumara", which was like a sweet potato.

Our destination was Kawakawa, at the Bay of Islands. We found Smith's Campground, and got a site right at water's edge. Lucky! It had been a warm, sunny day, but not hot. After settling in, I planned to take a swim in the Pacific, but instead we discussed the plan of what we would see and do, in this area. We decided to immediately take an offer of a 3 hour boat ride in the vicinity of the many islands here, with a man, Keith, who takes people out in his private craft. He is a guide for marlin fishermen, also plays professional golf circuit in Europe and America, when tournaments are on. He was very knowledgeable. Weather was pleasant, but very windy. He drove us all around, showed us the reef like an extremely large coral head, where Captain Cook ran his ship aground, in the 1700's as he explored here. On one island, with steep sides rising right up out of the water, there were a couple of houses on the top, helicopters were used to bring people, and materials up when houses were built. There was no landing off the water, but a helicopter pad on the top, for access – that was different. We were near 4 Australian navy ships, and 1 from New Zealand, that were lying at anchor: Prince Charles of England is here now, in nearby town of Paihia and that is the reason for the naval accompaniment. February 6 is a Maori holiday, celebrating the treaty with Britain many, many years ago. There will be a parade in the town, we saw many sailors in their white uniforms, leave the large ships and go ashore in small tenders, to be escorts in the parade. Keith planned to take us further, to see the "hole in the rock", right in the ocean, but it was so bumpy sitting in this small craft, Wilbur thought it was not good for Jessie, she has much back trouble, and it would be another half-hour ride to that spot. This is a beautiful area.

After returning, we booked a tour (with agent in the camp) to go on a bus on the 90 mile beach, along the Tasman sea, to Cape Reinga, the north tip, of the north island. This will be an all day tour – decided to take the bus so Wilbur will not have to drive the long distance there, and back. We had already made reservation for Thursday, to be at Wellington, at the bottom of north island, 600 miles from here, to take the ferry boat to the south island. That is a lot of driving, hence, this bus tour is planned. After the ride in Bay of Islands, we had a meal, relaxed, and retired. We had a beautiful day!

**SUNDAY FEBRUARY 6**

We stood at the road entrance to Smith's Camp, and were picked up at 7:45 a.m. by the bus, for the trip we scheduled yesterday. The driver went to several more sites, to get passengers, including beautiful hotels in this resort city of Paihia. I noted lovely landscaping throughout the area, and beautiful flowers EVERYWHERE. This will be an all day trip to the northern most tip of north island, it is a bright, sunny morning, just cool enough for a light jacket. The fare was 85 ND per person. We were given information about places we passed, and I will include it here: John the Baptist church, built in 1837, the first Anglican church mission. Okaihau village – the name means “windy” in Maori. Sheep, cattle ranching were prevalent here, saw an occasional dairy farm. The heavily forested land is part of a National Forest, contained “pukati” and “kauri” trees. The yellow flowers covering many of the fields are called “ragwort”. The “pohutukawa” tree was different, it did not grow straight up, had many different trunks and bright red flowers. The “privet tree” had cream colored flowers, also there were purple flowering trees seen in some fields. Harrier hawks flew around, one came very close to bus windshield. Meat markets passed in villages were called “butchery”. Are crossing the “Mangamuka” mountain range, runs east to west across New Zealand, is 383 meters high, at the summit. There are 33 varieties of fern trees growing, the “punga” is most prevalent. The oldest “kauri” tree is about 1200 years old.

At 10:00 a.m. made a stop, saw very interesting things: went into a kiwi house, the strange bird of New Zealand. They are a night oriented, flightless bird, walk around and push their extraordinarily long beak into the ground, eat insects and up to 200 worms a night, was very dim inside, as kiwi's sleep in daylight. We did see a couple of live ones, walking around, a flashlight was shown on them briefly. A bush walk nearby, was very interesting, dense ferns, bushes, thin trees that looked like they survived a fire, the bark looked black. This is caused by a mold growing under the bark, is natural. The very loud, humming noise heard, was caused by millions of cicada insects in the trees. Next, into the glowworm cave, a completely dark (tiny red lights in a continuous line on the floor showed where to walk) area, the glowworms showed up on walls and ceiling, as tiny lights – like lightening bugs seen at night, in Midwest U.S.

Back on the bus, passed closely by a cemetery and church, both very old looking. It was at the edge of city Kaitia, looked very clean, old style houses, and covered sidewalks still used in front of business buildings. This city serves entire district of north island, neat houses had flowers, flowers in all yards. A wood board, “triboard” is made here, from processed wood chips, lumber industry prevalent in area. - - - Just had a stop for morning tea, a custom of the English and still carried on here. - - - Next, after coming to the end of paved road, the bus turned onto the beach of the Tasman sea. This is on the west side of New Zealand, Pacific is on right side, as we are driving north. We drove on the 90 mile beach, a very wide stretch of sand bordering the sea. I've made many bus tours, in my travels, never before encountered one like this. The driver went into the shallow water, I thought it would become stuck, but he said sand was very firm and if he drove up into the dry sand, that would happen. We passed another bus, going in opposite direction, this is a regular route. Stop was made midway to Cape Reinga, we got off and were able to wade

in shallow sea water, which was very warm. Bus driver told us to look for tiny mussels, under the sand, wherever a little mound was seen. By poking down there with finger, the little animal could be brought up, and put in a pail driver provided. He said they make a pancake-like food from them, would be his evening meal. How interesting to learn another food culture! What a trip this is, have so much to write about. In the Maori language, "reinga" means "jumping off place". A Maori believed he should jump off the rock here, his body will float along the ridge of a long, high range, then float down river to the bottom of the sea and be carried to an island, where he came from, for all eternity. There was no town, at the tip of land, where the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean meet, just a lighthouse and a tiny postoffice, where one could mail a postcard, from here. I did this. It was very windy, up on the cape, we sat and ate a box lunch served to us, by the driver.

I should mention the sand dunes that appeared, as bus driver turned into a shallow river and drove away from the beach. They were very high, he made a stop, said anyone could climb up the highest one, about 60 feet. I did, what did I see at the top? More sand. I had taken off my shoes and socks, to climb up, now squatted down, and sort of slid down to the bottom. What fun! Driving further, we soon were out of the river, and in forested area, leading to the high cape.

Leaving the cape Reinga area, found the parasite vine called "poder" covering trees and bushes along the road, really profuse, had yellowish color. The road was very hilly and twisty, one of the female passengers became carsick, bus driver stopped two times, to let her out for a few minutes, I felt sorry for her. Later we made a stop, as we progressed south, at Houhora, to visit the Wagner-Sybriski museum, named for a German and a Polish family, who settled here many years ago. They collected all kinds of objects used in early living here, antiques of every kind, household, farming, hunting, etc. From the ceiling in one area, were over 300 chamber pots hanging, used in days before indoor plumbing. It was amazing, to see this extremely large collection of objects, old washing machines, cooking equipment, everything used in daily chores. Life was not easy then. Took a lot of pictures, on unusual trip today. Now on good hard road, areas more populated, as we progressed back to Bay of Islands, and our camp. Arrived in light rain, but air still warm. After unpacking my backpack, used during this day, I went into the ocean for a swim. It was very windy, waves splashed against me, tide was going out, but it felt good. Then took a shower, we had a meal, played cards for awhile, and retired. I am writing this while lying up in my bunk, it is raining very hard outside now. It's kind of hard to climb up here, but I am agile, and really don't mind it. Clothing in suitcase is near, and handy. Tomorrow we must leave here, and drive south.

## **MONDAY FEBRUARY 7**

As I climbed down from my upper bed, found it was raining hard, so did not swim. Slept well, felt good – we had light breakfast, then left the campground about 9:00 a.m., headed south to Rotorua area, would have to drive through Auckland again. All driving would be on Route 1, passing Hamilton also. The wind blew very hard all day, but rain stopped. There were many beautiful vistas, much forested, high land, then some cleared that stretched as far as we could see. The lumber industry is one of their big economies, they do practice reforestation, to renew the forests. An extra beautiful spot was about 20 miles north of

Auckland, where the road now ran right along the Pacific ocean. We made a stop for pictures, and walking a bit along the sand. The surf was wild, huge waves splashed ashore, could hardly believe there were 3 wind surfers out there, being blown very fast along the water. We ate at a small tea room here, I had pumpkin soup, a grilled cheese and onion sandwich, and tea – in very English style. Bought a beach towel of New Zealand here, and filled the camper with gas.

Web did wonderfully driving all day, reached Rotarura at 5:30 p.m., but then had a hard time finding the campsite we were searching for. Asked a couple of times, then did find it. Also found a store where we purchased food, then got settled in our camp spot. This one is not on a lakefront, but is close to the lake. We played cards after eating our meal, then retired. Rotarura has many scenic attractions, we have studied about them, - thermal pools, geysers, hot bubbling mud spots, etc. Our camp spot is Holden's On The Bay, Rotarura. Good night!

## **TUESDAY FEBRUARY 8**

After breakfast, we asked directions to the geyser, Waiotapu, , were told it was a 20 minute drive from the camp, and the geyser erupted every morning at 10:15, just follow Route 5. Web drove for 40 minutes, didn't find it, so turned back toward the camp, but stopped in a grocery store for food and liquid refreshment. It was called "Pak and Save", a self-serve. Got sort of lost again, finding the camp, had to ask , things are not marked well here. We ate lunch, good ham and cheese sandwiches in the camper, then were ready to take off on a tour, in a jeep with driver and guide. . First I talked into my recorder, relating yesterday's trip. The jeep driver was Grahame, a native Maori man, and Eldad, the guide, from Israel. We were headed for the area of Rerewhaakitia, a Maori name meaning "flying monster" or figuratively a large eagle. Both men were very informative and helpful, said we were going to a mountain which had erupted many years ago, now had a crater 1000 feet deep, and 1 mile long. They drove out of town on highway 5, then up a terrible mountain road, it became just a track over rocky area, we bounced around miserably! It was over land that still belonged to the Maori tribe, we had to pass through a guarded entry, and it reminded me of the times in Saudi Arabia, when friend Hans and his wife Afaf would take us up mountains, on rocky tracks, to explore that country. Hans spoke excellent Arabic, and would talk with the bedouin.

Finally arriving at the top, we viewed the huge crater below us, the many different colors on the walls, were exciting: red, rust, light green, off-white, tan, was hard to believe what I was seeing. The colors were from different minerals, a very unusual sight and worth the long, bumpy ride. Our guide Eldad, planned to have us walk down into the crater with him, and up out the other end – Jessie and Web declined, but I accepted. Eldad and I walked down the steep incline (60%), digging our feet into the loose bits of "cinder-like" rock, and descending slowly. He held my hand on the very steepest, hardest part, then I walked erect without his help all the rest of the way down. We walked along the very bottom, taking some pictures, then slowly up the other end. I had to rest twice on the ascent, but made it all right alone, was not puffing hard! It was exciting for me, again reminded me of walking down into the crater we discovered, in desert of Saudi Arabia, and camping at it's edge with friends. I am 78 years old, and can still hike, climb, enjoy outdoor adventures. At the

top, our guides provided a “tailgate lunch” and thermos of tea, then we drove back. A mountain in the distance called Mt. Tarawera, had a helicopter landing pad on top, and we noted a helicopter preparing to land.

What a wonderful adventure this has been – on the way back our driver and guide explained forestry projects we passed. After cutting native trees, California redwoods and Monterey pines were introduced for replanting, grew well, and are now quite large. Since forestry is big business here, we often saw large logging trucks on the highways, carrying huge logs to the mills. Coming back to the thermal area, we passed bubbling mud pools, with steam coming up, they are quite common. Were told that in 1800’s a volcano erupted and destroyed an entire Maori village, killing all. There was the smell of sulphur in this area – the last volcano I saw that was steaming, was in Java, Indonesia, about 8 or 9 years ago. We were driven back to our campsite, I really enjoyed the afternoon adventure, but it was hard on Jessie, the rough road jolted her back badly. The fee for each of us was 52 ND. We will leave here tomorrow, for more thermal areas.

### **WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 9 (grandson Paul’s birthday)**

Awoke very early, after a good full night’s sleep – walked to the pool and had a good swim, showered and dressed in the clean shower house. I was not stiff at all, after that strenuous hike down into and up, the deep crater yesterday – thought I might be. We left Holden’s Bay camp, Rotarura, at 8:20 a.m., drove Highway 5 toward the hot sulphur pools, and Lady Knox geyser. This whole, long valley is thermal, vents come in the ground that spit mud, hot water, or a combination of both, and sulphur steam floats upward. They are right in the city too, saw some at edge of the golf course we passed. Having found the proper road this time, we stopped for pictures at a large, bubbling mud pool, then further on, paid admission to Wai-O-Tapu Thermal area. Here we walked a very large area of huge holes in the ground, with boiling water down in them, and steam floating up. Various colors shown on the walls, from different minerals in the rock, yellow, light green, light tan, etc. It was awesome. A large body of hot water was called the champagne pool, because of the bubbling, and the light tan color. The smell of sulphur was everywhere. A sign DANGER, with skull and crossbones shown, was at pool edge, we walked on large boards here.

After this awesome place, we drove to the nearby Lady Knox geyser, which spouts up every day at 10:15 a.m., lasts about 5 minutes. A ranger there described this was a very small crater, years ago, forest workers bathed and washed clothes in the warm water, using soap. They learned that the soap made the little crater erupt, so now a ranger drops soap into it each day and it erupts. The cone has become much larger now. We waited, watching, along with other visitors, and it did erupt very high into the air. Wind was blowing toward me, and I received spray on my face and camera, as I captured the scene. It was awesome, and strange to think of this thermal power under the earth we tread on. There is a nuclear power plant in this area, capturing the thermal energy.

Leaving the Wai-O-Tapu area, and studying the map, we drove south on Highway 5 to Lake Taupo, then joined Highway 1. Stopping for views at the lake, and to make lunch in the camper, were awed by lake and cityscape in front of us. This is the largest lake in New Zealand. How neat it is to be traveling through fantastic scenery, stop and eat in the



camper, rest a bit, then travel on again. Our route took us through the center of lower north island, with areas of volcanoes, twisty mountain roads, and cleared lands where sheep, lambs were grazing, and sometimes cattle. There were also fields of grain, many vegetable farming areas, and often roadside stands where vegetables and fruits were offered. New Zealand seemed to be a busy, productive country. It took us 6 hours of steady driving to reach the area just before Wellington, where we take the ferry tomorrow, at 10:00 a.m., to reach south island. Our reservation had been made for this.

We found Camp Batchelor (which we selected from the camp book) quite easily, outside of the city. It was very close to the shore of the Tasman sea, after getting settled, we all took a walk to the beach, it was good to exercise. There was a lifeguard station here, we saw guards practicing getting boards into the surf – Jessie and I walked into the waves, found the water was cooler here than at Cape Reinga – of course we are going south, closer to antarctic area. We had a meal at a nearby eating spot, relaxed – and so to bed, up in my bunk. Must mention that all the camp grounds here are excellent – full hookups are available, the shower houses and laundry rooms are always clean, kitchens have toasters, microwaves and usually a radio or TV in a community room.

#### **THURSDAY FEBRUARY 10**

Was up very early, after a good, full night's sleep, used the shower house – back to the camper for my breakfast of cereal, banana and milk – then as I ate Web and Jessie showered and dressed, had coffee, and we were all ready to leave the campsite. Web drove into Wellington, headed for our 10 o'clock booked departure on the Interislander Ferry, across Cook Straits, and onto the south island. There was very heavy traffic in Wellington, but found the port by following signs, then there was a long wait in line of cars. Many freight train cars were loaded first, then autos started to enter. Every auto had to be backed into the ferry, which was not easy for Wilbur, but an attendant walked next to the camper and helped drivers. Then all passengers had to leave the autos and campers, and go up to main deck. It was a grey, misty atmosphere, we sat on the outside deck, but fog became so thick as we traversed the straits, you couldn't see much at all. I did note that we came very, very close to rock walls we were passing. It rained lightly as I noted north island disappearing in the fog. It was a 2 ½ hour trip, we had to sit inside most of it, because of the rain. We docked at town of Picton, on the north tip of the south island, autos and campers were driven off the ferry, and onto the highway. Picton was a very pretty city, houses sat on high hills, there were flowers in all yards. Now we drove on to Blenheim, on motorway 1, this is an area with many, many grape vineyards and wineries, an annual wine festival is held here. We did not stop in the city, but got onto highway 4 and kept driving south, through beautiful mountain areas on twisty roads, some very narrow and with drastic drop-off at road edge. There were forests of pine, and some denuded areas where trees were cut, but these will be replanted. At the town of Nelson we made a wrong turn, while searching for next campsite (the roads are not marked well at the corners) but finally found it. This one is not as nice as those we have been using, not all the amenities present, that we have had, but it is acceptable – this is just an overnight stop. After getting settled, we picked up Kentucky fried chicken dinners from the shop nearby, ate, played cards for a little while, then I took a nice long walk over the salt flats, next to the Tasman sea. Wilbur and Jessie rested. The weather was very mild, a little wind was blowing, sea air felt good.

Tomorrow we head south again, exploring south island, our destination is Milford Sound, an area at the very bottom of the island, where there are fjord-like peaks that jut up sharply, out of the sea. As we drove today, passed many fields with reindeer behind the fences, raised here for the venison, also passed many large logging trucks on the road.

## FRIDAY FEBRUARY 11

Slept so well! My body is behaving very nicely, I feel good. I showered early, before Web and Jess arose, then had my breakfast while they used the shower house. I most always have the same menu, raisin bran cereal, banana, milk and coffee – sometimes add toast or other fruit. We prepared the motor home for travel, and took off on highway 6, going south, went through forest preserves, with large trees covering the extremely high hills. Clear streams flowed down them to the bottom of gorges, and often lakes would come into view. It was foggy in the early morning, fog drifted down over slopes, and I gazed in awe at the sight. We stopped at a sign along the road “Longest Swinging Bridge”, and walked across it, was suspended by 2 cables, only wide enough for 2 people, the surface for walking was of woven wire, and the bridge swayed in the wind. An interesting walk! There was a sign reading “no more than 15 people on bridge at one time”. The very strong Buller river flowed beneath the bridge, I saw a group of people just pulling their rubber raft up on the rocks, after riding through rapids. After crossing, I talked with an older gentleman, from New Zealand, who said he used to don a dive helmet (that covered the whole head) and go down into rivers like this one, search along the bottom for gold. This was gold mine country, searching was popular 60 years ago. The bridge crossing was a unique experience. Later we stopped for lunch at Murcheson, a very small town, At an eating place I had an open face, hot cheese and vegetable roll, and a milk shake – all very tasty.

We kept driving south, now we were right along the coast, below Westport. The Tasman sea stretched out to the horizon, a lovely sight. There were spectacular rocky shorelines and then miles of sandy beaches. Sometimes sheer rock walls came right down to the sea, the road had been cut right out of the rock. Often there were one-lane bridges, a sign there would tell you which auto had the right of way. An arrow pointing up, colored green, and one pointing down, colored red, showed that first one approaching either side, had permission to go first. There were no attendants, this part of south island is very sparsely settled. The roads were very scary in many places, but Web did a great job of driving. Before Greymouth, we stopped at the Punakaiki National Park, a narrow area between highway and sea, where you could walk a path out over rocks, to view rock formations called “Pancake Rocks”. The Maori name for pancake is “punakaiki”. There were also blow holes here, worn through by constant heavy waves dashing against rock walls, water would dash up out of the top of the hole, making a loud noise, and falling back down. There were fantastic formations in the water, very tall, looked like stacks of pancakes, one on top of the other, made when calcite deposits in rock washed away, leaving lines a few inches apart of heavier rock. Legends, and names of towns here in New Zealand, are being kept, honoring the Maori tribal people. After this great natural sight, we drove on and arrived at town of Greymouth.

We asked, at a gas station, for location of our next campsite, and being difficult to find, a man led us in his car, to it – how friendly! It is at a beach, and after getting motorhome

established in the campsite, I donned my bathing suit, Jessie and I walked the short path to the sea, I went into the water, and jumped the waves for 10 minutes, such fun! The water was comfortable, not too cold, it felt so good. Returning, we played cards for awhile, I was loser – 1 ND. Next we prepared a meal, with pork chops, in the camp kitchen, which had an electric bar-b-q unit, did the chops nicely. While cooking, I talked to a small group of Americans, all from Alaska, and touring this country as we are. They were friendly, was nice to talk with them. As we drove today, passed several bicyclists on the highway, it was tough going for them, riding up those high hills. I did some hand laundry in the wash room, wrote in this journal, enjoyed the pleasantly warm evening, and went “night night”.

## **SATURDAY FEBRUARY 12**

In the morning we tried to re-confirm our flights, both from Christchurch to Auckland, also from there to Fiji, but as the office girl at camp called the travel agent in Greymouth, found they were closed on Saturday. We'll have to try again on Monday – everything seems to close here on weekends, which is a nice feature for families. We left the campground about 8:45 a.m. driving south on motorway 6, sometimes close to shore of Tasman sea, then through very wild country, forests, bush, no reforestation seen. This part of the country is very rugged, some large areas of cattle ranching seen, also some fenced fields of deer. Very beautiful, rugged country, sparsely populated, different than north island. We came to the very small town of Hokitika, it was unusual to see the very tall, clock tower, right in the main intersection of the few streets. I needed film, and did find a pharmacy open, that carried it, bought a t-shirt too, and the man changed money (bank was not open) for me, used travel checks of \$100, for 186ND. People have been very friendly and helpful. The next stop was at the Franz Joseph glacier field, we drove to the low, bottom end area of the ice field, inquired about helicopter flight to the top, but would have had to wait 2 hours for a flight. Wilbur didn't want to wait, was not even sure he would like to do it. So we drove on further, through very high hills, many one-lane bridges, crossed many rivers. We stopped at a small lake, the water was so smooth, I called it “Mirror Lake”, it reflected the mountains around it. As I took pictures, standing in tall grass at water's edge, the small insects, called in Florida “no see-ums”, bit us constantly on the legs, one of our first bug problems. We departed quickly, even though it was so scenic. It had been cloudy all morning, but now was clearing.

We soon arrived at the Fox glacier, inquired there, found we could go up in a helicopter, a 30 minute ride, with stop on top, for \$71 – another passenger wanted to go also, it helped make that lower price instead of \$120. Web went up with Jessie and I, later said it was spectacular, glad he did it. We lifted up from the helipad, just across from the tiny village, went right next to mountain wall as we ascended – so close – the ice-field next to us, and below, looked bluish, not white. There were huge cracks, or crevasses below us, very deep, we kept climbing higher, pilot pointed out 2 animals, called “tahr”, these have been imported from the Himalaya mountains. It was amazing that these deerlike animals can live up here, in this ice field, so exciting! We went over snow areas, crags covered with snow, right next to the top of Mt. Cook, the highest mountain in New Zealand, I'm on top of the mountains! The pilot then landed, on snow, it was deep and slippery, we got out where it was only ankle-deep, threw icy snowballs, took pictures. The sun was now out, and air pleasant, not windy, Wilbur took video pictures up here, also as we ascended. What a

wonderful adventure this was. Then we descended slowly, over icy glacier, steep mountain sides, to the helipad again. After this we drove south again, about 220 miles (179 Kilometers) to Haast, just a very rural settlement. Found the only motor home camp about 8 miles from the highway, toward the sea. It was the poorest one we have used, the no-seeums, tiny flying insects, bit us badly, seemed to fly in swarms everywhere. Luckily we were not tent camping, but were o.k. in the motor home. We had hamburgers for dinner, with vegetables, retired early.

## **SUNDAY FEBRUARY 13**

Left the camp near Haast about 8:00 a.m., drove south on highway 6, which is the only road on the west side of the south island. Soon it became very difficult driving, as it wound up into the Mt. Aspiring scenic reserve, twisting and turning, there were many one-lane bridges, where you had to carefully observe the right-of-way signs, not get half way across and meet another car. One and a half weeks ago there were severe rains and flooding here, with very bad wash-outs of the highway, the drop-down at road edge was frightening, there were miles and miles of this type road. The scenery was spectacular, when you could take eyes off the road, bush-type native growth on mountains part way up, then rugged granite, sheer drops, sometimes snow was visible on the tops. Luckily the weather was nice and sunny, with blue sky. We finally arrived at Wanaka, a small, beautiful town on Lake Wanaka, we found there was another lake nearby, Lake Hawea. We had lunch at Wanaka, in a restaurant, then drove on, after resting a bit, to Queenstown, arriving about 2:15 p.m. We found the campground selected, after some inquiry. Queenstown is a very large city, one of the most beautiful I have seen, in my world travels, in a beautiful setting, high above Lake Wakapitu. There are mountains all around it, the city is right at the water's edge of this clear blue lake. Shortly before Queenstown, we passed a historical, old bridge, across a deep gorge and fast river below. They do bungee jumping from this bridge, we stopped to get pictures of the beautiful structure, made of wood, no longer used for auto traffic, there is a new concrete bridge. After getting settled in our camp site Jessie and I walked down the long hill, to the business district and shopped. Prices we noted were so high, I couldn't believe it, I did find 2 t-shirts to purchase, also bought a new audio tape for the recorder, that was 3.95ND – we pay about \$1.25. Wool sweaters were 199ND, sweat shirts we would pay about \$15. sold here for 79ND. The Japanese have bought many businesses here, could tell by wording on the store windows, signs were in Japanese and English. Many, many Japanese were seen on the streets, and we were told they have bought much real estate here, both residential and commercial. While in the business area, we bought a "rotisserie chicken", cooked and browned very nicely, had it for our supper. The business district starts right on the bay of the lake, mountains rise up all around, it is so beautiful! As we were driving today, noted roadside signs that were so different than ours, for instance: "loose metal" meant repairs to road, we say "loose gravel". Another one might say "metal surface", and this came, we were told, from early Scotch settlers who came here years ago: they referred to rock as metal because of the metals, iron, zinc, etc. in it, and when broken up like gravel, for road repair, they call it loose metal. The saying remains here today.

**MONDAY FEBRUARY 14****Valentine's Day**

I wanted to call daughter Mary, so went to the phone early in the morning, using a card – finally got the Sprint service – they had difficulty with connection, gave me the long code numbers for a FON card, would have had to wait until tomorrow to use it – what a hassle! Calling from international areas is not always easy. Finally, I called collect, reached granddaughter Shannon, then Mary, she was so glad to hear from us, had not received the Valentine, or other card I had sent. Everything was o.k. back at home, was good to talk to her. We wanted to go up on the cable car that ascends the high mountains overlooking the city, and did so. A stop was made at an old cemetery on the slope, we looked at headstones with very old dates of burial. Some of the newer graves used a very large piece of granite, unevenly cut from the mountain, for a headstone, with names and dates engraved thereon. It was quite different. The view from the top of Bob's peak was so impressive, bright blue sky, the huge lake below, mountains all around the city, it was fantastic. I think Queenstown displays one of the most beautiful sights I've seen.

Jessie had shopped in stores for lambskin rugs to take home, but was not satisfied with any seen (most were in Japanese owned stores), so after we left the campsite and drove south, stopped at a local shop where the skins were sold, from the sheep ranch there. They were so much softer, and priced more reasonably, she bought 3. I bought 2 small pieces, just to show when I give lectures – I display artifacts from my trips. There were countless numbers of sheep seen in fields, as we drove, also fenced areas of reindeer. The shepherd, and 2 or 3 dogs, tend the sheep, and sometimes they have to cross a highway, to get to another field where they can graze. When this happens, autos must stop, sheep and herder have the right-of-way, this happened to us. We continued to drive south, to the town of TeAnau, and found the very nice campground selected from the book. It was right on the lake TeAnau shore, and after getting settled, I had a very nice swim, Jessie just waded in the shallows. The bottom was not all sand, but composed of very small pebbles, the water was comfortably warm, as was the air. It felt so good. For dinner in the evening, Wilbur said he would treat us at the nearby restaurant, I selected lamb ke-bob with peanut sauce as my entrée, it was delicious, was served with several vegetables. Sheep were seen everywhere in fields, as we drove today, this is one of the major economies in the south island. We made reservations, at the camp office, for a bus and boat tour, all day tomorrow, to the Milford Sound area, this was our destination here at the bottom of south island. By taking the bus tour, Wilbur will not have to drive the mountain roads, the fee is 85ND for each, I think that is very reasonable. Retired happily.

**TUESDAY FEBRUARY 15**

We were picked up at 7:30 a.m. by the bus, right at the campground gate; there were only 20 passengers, that was nice, so much better than being on a bus tour with 40 people. The drive was very scenic, along lakes, next to high mountains, covered with deciduous beech trees, instead of pines we had seen in so many places. Several stops were made, one was at a deep chasm of solid rock, where thunderous waters rushed over huge boulders, they had sculpted tunnels and rounded holes by their force, through hundreds of years. There was evidence, in many places, where the heavy rains (average 350 inches a year) had washed away whole sides of mountains, we were told avalanches of mud and stone

had killed people. We saw a plaque on a boulder, commemorating men had been killed in a slide, in 1983. In a compartment, at rear of the bus, bicycles were carried, a stop was made at one point, and anyone who wished to do so, could ride down the long steep road ahead, would be picked up at the bottom, 15 kilometers away. The road went through a crudely carved tunnel, through a mountain, there were 2000 meters solid granite above! I thought of riding a bicycle, but then thought I might slip, in loose gravel on the road, and fall, so just rode down in the bus, didn't want any chance of an injury.

Arriving at Milford Sound, a harbor on the Tasman Sea, we were escorted onto large sailing ship called the Wanderer. The sails were furled, motor was used to leave the harbor and go through the fjord-like area. Sharp peaks of rock came right up out of the water, were very high. The highest one was pointed at the top, was called "miter's peak". There were seals observed, several times, lying on rocky places. It was partly sunny, but swirls of fog sometimes covered the tops of peaks, I wanted to get a slide of the tallest one, despite the fog. We headed out to the open sea, where the wind was very strong, and cold. I had extra sweat suit with me, and put the pants over my slacks, put on the red nylon jacket that blocked the wind, then I was warm. Now the captain asked for volunteers, to help put up the sails, several people came to help, the huge sails were unfurled, and we now were under sail power. I stood on deck and took pictures, enjoyed it all. A "fjord" is made by a glacier slicing through the granite mountain, then it fills up with sea water, a "sound" is made in the same way, but then it fills up with fresh water from a river, or mountain stream. Captain Cook first entered this area from the Tasman Sea, but thought the fjord area was too small for his sailing ship to enter, and then turn around, so he never explored it. Later, other explorers entered, learned of it's grandeur and the high peaks, wrote about it. Our cruise on the Wanderer lasted 2 ½ hours, I enjoyed every bit of it. On returning to the sound area, sails were lowered, motors were started and we returned to the dock. We found our bus, among several others, and were driven back to TeAnau. On arrival there, found it was very hot, about 90 F. What a contrast in temperature! The bus was comfortable, we all enjoyed the day. After arrival back at the motor home, I put on a bathing suit, am sitting in the sun at a picnic table, having a refreshing glass of beer while I write in this journal. It surely is hot here. When finished writing, I took a swim in the lake – no one else seems to swim, I love it, seems like it is therapy to mind and body, for me. After our evening meal we played cards, and tonight I was the winner, then climbed into my bunk and retired.

## **WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 16**

## **Ash Wednesday**

Had an early departure from camp site this morning, left at 8:30 a.m., for Wilbur wanted to drive steadily today, cover a lot of territory, so that we can arrive at Christchurch by the 19th, when we must turn in the motorhome. We will fly to Auckland, from Christchurch. We headed east on Route 67, drove to Mossbourg and stopped briefly, so Jessie could buy one more sheepskin rug, remembered she needed another for a gift, back home. Then we proceeded to Gore, where we picked up the motorway 1. We are almost at the very bottom of south island – how interesting, we were at the very top of the north island, on this trip, so have covered all of New Zealand, have seen so much, were treated nicely all the way on our journey, people are very friendly. We turned north on route 1, found rolling hills, much cleared land, many fields full of sheep, seems there were sheep everywhere! At one

point, we had to let a flock cross the road to get to another field, we were close enough to the herder standing at roadside, to talk to him and get a picture. He told us that for identification, lambs get an ear tag, that is how owners can claim their flocks – the herder and dogs stay with the animals in the fields, as they graze. He had a small vehicle, an ATV, that he rode slowly as he rounded them up, the dogs are trained to keep sheep from wandering. I have not yet got a picture of deer in the field, always going too fast when we see them.

After heading north for awhile, the road came in view of the Pacific ocean, now we are on the east side of south island, reached town of Dunedin. This is a large city, we just followed the highway through it, did not stop. Then we reached Timaru, quite a good sized city too, and again noted flowers in almost every yard of the attractive houses. About 20 kilometers further we found our campsite at edge of Temuka, it was very large, with grassy, good-sized sites for campers, not many were occupied. This was more of a rural area, not as populated as areas driven through earlier in the day. We walked, getting some exercise, to a grocery store nearby, bought fish sticks, fresh vegetables and potatoes, had a good meal of them in the motorhome. After this, played our usual card games, I won \$1.40 tonight. It was cool enough for a sweater as we walked, we're away from the 90 F temperature. What a wonderful trip this is, we're all enjoying it. I forgot to mention the quaint looking city of Oamaru, passed through before reaching Timaru, it was on hillsides overlooking the Pacific blue waters, there were flowers all over, it was a lovely sight. The weather pattern has been cloudy in the morning, and cool, but clearing by 11:00 a.m. or so, and sunny in the afternoon.

#### **THURSDAY FEBRUARY 17**

We were very leisurely this morning, in our departure from this camp, because we are only 2 hours drive from the large city of Christchurch, where we return the Maui camper, our traveling home. We have it until Saturday. It was cloudy and a little foggy most of the way, could not see the Pacific, though we were so close to it. Driving into the city was not a problem, and we had no trouble locating our last campsite. It was close to the airport, where the Maui Company offices are located, and where we will turn in the camper. Jessie had selected this site, for convenience of being near the airport, we arrived about 11:30 a.m. We had a free afternoon, relaxed, because we had been moving quite fast, after leaving Milford Sound. I must mention that all the motor camps we have used are very adequate, have full hookups for electric, water, sewer, there are clean shower and toilet rooms, a building with large kitchen having several electric stoves, sinks, tables, benches, a laundry room with washer and dryer and usually lines outside for laundry. Some camps had a TV room, books to read, and most had a large trampoline outside. Tent camping is allowed, many bicyclists sleep in tents. Charges are about 8 to 12 ND per person, per night, and directories to camps all over north and south islands are given, when you rent the camper. Native population, and travelers we met from Europe, America and oriental countries have been courteous, happy, and always helpful in giving directions, etc.

Jessie and I walked a long way in the afternoon, Wilbur wanted to rest. We found some stores, one carried eastern foods that looked interesting, and since I lived and traveled in the far east, I selected a couple of packets, also a jar of processed garlic. Through a travel

business, we booked a tour around Christchurch for tomorrow afternoon for Wilbur, Jessie and I. Today, just before finding our campsite, we passed a field of deer, many close to the fence, were going too fast for a picture, so Wilbur turned around, went back and we got pictures of reindeer, finally! After our evening meal, played the usual card game, listened to the radio, and retired. Climbing up and down to my overhead bed is not easy, the ladder is in the wrong place, but I make it all the time, with a lot of laughs, it's like an adventure!

## **FRIDAY FEBRUARY 18**

We had leisurely breakfast this a.m., because we will be staying in this camp all day, seeing city of Christchurch. Last evening, before retiring, I took time to have a nice hot bath in the big, shiny tub in the women's shower area, enjoyed relaxing that way. This morning, I washed out a few clothes, hung them on the drying lines, also packed up most of my clothing in the suitcase, to be ready for tomorrow.

The afternoon bus tour took us through the city, Cathedral Square is right downtown, the large Anglican cathedral is beautiful, there is a flower clock in the square. A feature we had read about, is the "Wizard", a man dressed in magician attire, who talks to crowds of people who assemble and listen to his speeches, we did see him in the square. We passed the exclusive boy's school, where students wear black and white striped wool suitcoats, black shorts, knee socks, saw Canterbury University, the Art Center, drove over the four broad avenues that outline the city center, and took pictures at several stops. Our driver pointed out, and stopped, at the huge Blessed Sacrament Catholic church, and the Canterbury Diocesan buildings next to it, interesting architecture. We had tea, in a typically English tearoom, were served small sandwiches and cookies (English customs are very prevalent here). Next we were driven to small town of Lyttleton, up on hills above the harbor area, our bus driver said he lives there. It is a busy port, two large cruise ships were tied up, named the Marco Polo, and the European, the houses on the hillsides of the town all have a beautiful view. Don, the driver, told us the harbor is the bowl of an ancient crater, which filled with water from the Pacific ocean, hence it's round shape. Leaving, we drove through a long tunnel that goes through the mountain between city of Christchurch, and Lyttleton harbor, the white tiles lining the walls are scrubbed every day to keep them clean. We drove along several beach areas, stopped at a rocky promontory for viewing, Jessie and I climbed up on it. Back in Christchurch, we noted the Avon river winding through it, small boats are rented there for "punting" on it, that's the English word for the custom of floating slowly on the river Avon in England. Our last stop was at a huge rose garden, along the banks of the river and surrounding a huge, old home. At the river's edge were wooden boxes, on posts, that held pieces of bread for feeding the ducks nearby. The rose garden was beautiful, we walked through it, admiring the great variety of blooms, then were taken back to the campsite. We were in this city just at the time of their week long "festival of flowers". All the garden clubs compete, displaying floral creations inside the cathedral, also the center aisle is completely decorated with designs, made of colored flower petals, it was magnificent. Many large bouquets are placed everywhere, prizes are awarded for design, color, etc. How lucky for us, to be here at this time. After our evening meal, played cards again, I lost, .50 NZ cents. Then took a nice, hot bath while Jess and Web made up



their bed, we all retired. This is our last night in the motor home, a great way to travel through New Zealand

## **SATURDAY FEBRUARY 19**

Guess I had my best night's sleep in this whole trip, didn't wake until 5:15 a.m.! We ate cereal, fruit, coffee and toast, then finished putting all our possessions into suitcases, preparatory to leaving the motor home. We had some food supplies left, took along a few edibles, cheese, crackers, 2 oranges, instant coffee, apricots, and left the rest in a box which we put in the camp kitchen, for other travelers to use. We felt sure there would be young tent campers who would use it. Drove away from the camp, visited the dump station nearby, where one must empty the holding tanks, under the camper. There was no problem turning in the Mauri camper, except finding out that Web forgot to pick up the hose, at the dump station – had to pay 20ND for replacement – a small matter. Having reservations for a motel near the airport, a shuttle van took us there for overnight stay, our plane leaves on Sunday morning. Arriving at the motel, we were early, room was not ready, so we took a cab to downtown Christchurch and shopped for a couple of hours. I did find a sweat shirt for Web with a Kiwi bird on it, also one to take home. The flower displays were still around, many people were viewing them, we learned that home flower gardens are also judged, to find the best. Stopping in a small café, had lunch and some good muffins with our coffee, then took cab back to the motel. It was very nice, large rooms with a complete kitchen, sink, dishes, refrigerator, coffee, tea, sugar packets and a bottle of milk. Our host said all motels here are this way, to serve travelers – they can tour by automobile, spend the night in comfort in the motel, and enjoy preparing their own food if they wish. The weather today was cloudy, quite cool in the morning, warm and sunny in afternoon. We made a call for a taxi at 6:15 a.m. tomorrow, to the airport, our flight is 7:00 a.m.

## **SUNDAY FEBRUARY 20**

The taxi was at our lovely 4 room motel at 6:10 a.m., we were all ready to leave, the suitcases were all packed. Jessie and Web had expandable luggage, she really had to work hard to get all the items purchased on our trip, into those bags, but she did it. Our plane tickets to Auckland were 112.50 ND each, we already had tickets from Auckland to Fiji. Departure on our plane was easy, there were no crowds, as we have in America, breakfast was served in flight. On arrival at Auckland we re-checked for our next flight, picked up baggage, put it all into the "trolleys" provided, and walked to the nearby International terminal, an easy walk. We had a 4 hour wait, checked bags, got through emigration o.k. through passport process, entered plane when it was time, and flew to Fiji on Air Pacific. This was part of our round trip flight plan, a stay in Fiji. I had a seat next to a man, Mohammed Taki, he was born in Fiji. Jessie and Web were seated nearby.

Uneventful flight to Nadi airport, entered the small terminal, found it VERY hot, had to wait in line for passport inspection. We had no reservations here, so talked to the agent, who called a few resorts for us. The first one was 175 FD per night, more than we wanted to pay, he found another for 77 FD, which we said we would take, I wanted to be on a beach area, where there was coral to snorkel over. On changing money, found the rate 1.48 FD for \$1.00. Being driven to the resort, our driver said he could take us to the Hideaway Resort, a

nicer one, and they would match the 77 FD price. We looked at it, and decided to stay at the Hideaway, right on the water, coconut palms all over, individual bungalows, or some with 2 apartments. It is a luxurious resort, there is a very large dining hall, with open sides, a large stage with nightly entertainment, a swim pool, and best of all, coral area all along the resort frontage to the coral sea. There is a reef farther out, where waves were dashing against it. We all liked the resort, after seeing it, got settled in our bungalow, after the long, hot ride from the airport. Later we went to the restaurant area, then watched frog races which the personnel were putting on, for entertainment of the resort patrons. That was interesting. Then there was string music by musicians, and local dancers. We were tired, having come all the way from Christchurch today, and turned into our beds early. It had been a long day!

## **MONDAY FEBRUARY 21**

I slept very well, but heard it rain, at 5:00 a.m. After breakfast, I was anxious to get into the clear waters of the South Pacific, so we all walked out into the water, found it hard to walk over the coral as the tide was out, and water very shallow. I had done a lot of this, when doing scuba diving 4 years, while working in Saudi Arabia, we walked to the reef and deep water, from shore. Now, though we had to walk slowly, it was nice to see the living coral, and observe small marine animal life on the different species. Sometimes, after out a way, I floated along, observed the gobi again, perched on their front fins, and guarding their hole in the sand. After a while, Web turned back, said it was too hard walking – it was difficult. Jess and I went out to the reef, the waves were strong, the water was nice and warm. We returned, decided it was not a good time, when tide was out. Later on, I went out again by myself, right in front of our cottage, and found a better place to snorkel, the tide was coming in, water was deeper. When I floated, face down, and held onto a coral head, or a large staghorn coral, and kept quiet, small black fish would come close, brush against my hand with their tail, then swim straight up and bump into my face mask – I counted, one did this 10 times. I have learned, in my diving experience, that fish are very curious, if you are very quiet, they will actually brush you. I call that fun! I saw blue starfish, which I have seen before in warm seas, several kinds of sea cucumbers, butterfly, squirrel, sergeant major, damsel fish, all familiar to me. I loved it, was just like being backing the Red Sea, 7, 8, and 9 years ago. A strong wind came up, while I was snorkeling, I returned; later on we had a short rain shower.

After resting a bit, I went out again, now tide was in and the water was deep, the bigger fish come in with the tide, and I saw so much, really enjoyed it. A juvenile barracuda came along, swam near me for a long time, this is their usual manner, they swim up near the surface, and follow you, never had one bother me, but they are scary. Along came a whole school of yellow damsel fish, so many, that I did a 180 degree turn as I watched them, and still the unbroken school kept coming. I just floated and observed with face in water, breathing through the snorkel tube. Next I saw a huge crown-of-thorns starfish wrapping itself around a coral head, haven't seen one since I dived in the great barrier reef, Australia. There was so much life swimming around me, but now my arms were getting tired, so I stopped snorkeling, returned to the bungalow, showered, dressed in shorts and top and we went to the large restaurant area. First we played cards at a table, they observed "happy hour" before dinner time, we had rum punch they provided, as musicians played guitars.

For dinner I chose prawns over rice, a good garlic seasoning, and vegetables. Jess and Wilbur chose lobster. Then the evening entertainment started, called "We Are The World", local performers did mimicking to recordings of USA stars, Michael Jackson, Tina Turner, etc., all very entertaining. We walked lazily back to our rooms, in the balmy tropical air, soft wind stirred the palm trees.

## TUESDAY FEBRUARY 22

Slept well, had buffet breakfast in the open-sided restaurant. Now I'm sitting on our porch, in a bathing suit, enjoying the lovely, strong breeze that is blowing. The temperature is hot, but there is always a breeze blowing from the sea in front of me, this is a beautiful place. At 11:00 a.m. I will go to the nearby village, with a group, to partake of the ceremony of presenting Kava (a local drink), to the village chief. This is local culture, I like to partake of customs, the host will accompany us. 10 other people and myself, walked the ¼ mile to the village with a local Fiji man, on the way passed a small, wooden church, which they showed us, it was a Catholic church. I thought the Muslim faith was more prevalent here – I asked where the priest would come from to say mass, said he lived in the village. The building was small, and very plain. There were a few small, flat roofed houses, some people about, children playing in grassy areas. Arriving at the chief's house, we sat on mats on the floor, after leaving our shoes outside. Our leader brought out a low, carved wooden bowl and a pail with water. He put a little in the bowl, then added a cloth bag with ground-up kava root in it, squeezed the bag often, added a little more water, repeated the process. Now the bowl was filled, he brought a cup made from half a coconut shell, dipped it into the mixture, offered it to the chief, who drank it all. The local Fiji men in the room then clapped hands, 3 times. The cup, with kava juice, was passed to each person in the circle, each drank, the clapping was done. I asked the escort to take my picture, with my camera, as I drank, he did so – a couple of others wanted their picture also. After all had partaken, and 3 claps made each time, the man seated next to the chief spoke, in excellent English. He said he had been a school teacher for many years, and explained the presentation to the chief is a ceremonial, a token of friendship, and they like visitors to partake. He told us a lot of history of Fiji, and interesting facts. All true Fiji natives are Catholic, about 45% of the population are people from India, they practice the Moslem faith and settle near each other, in cities. That was interesting. We were asked, in turn, our country, age, how many children each had, etc., then we could ask questions. I asked many, received answers, and I gave him a t-shirt from America, with a Statue of Liberty on it. He was very pleased. Some words he gave me in Fiji language:

Bula	a greeting (hello)
Vinaka	thank you
Bure	a gathering place
Hale	a house
Kava	a drink made from root of kava bush, mixed by hand, strained through a cloth, served in a coconut shell, drink, clap hands 3 times

After completing the ceremony, we walked out of the village, were accompanied to the drive of the resort. Jessie and Web had hired a driver from the resort, and gone to the

town of Singatoha this morning, to shop for items to take home. In the afternoon Jess and I went out to snorkel, but her face mask, which she obtained from the resort, leaked badly, it's hard to view the fish and corals when this happens. Wilbur came out, after he had taken a nap, had a mask from the resort, but it leaked too, and they did not get full enjoyment of the corals and fish, but saw some. The wind became very strong, and likewise the current. We went back, after a short time.

About 5:00 p.m. a driver came and took us to the home of Mohammed, our driver who had brought us to the resort, and became a friend to us. He had invited us to his home, about 15 miles away, for a true Fiji dinner, wanted us to experience their culture. This family follows the Muslim faith, and since it was Ramadan time, they fast all daylight hours, only eat after 7:00 p.m. His wife had prepared small pieces of beef, cooked well with green beans and eggplant, breadfruit (much like potato), cooked and in a coconut milk sauce, small bowls of split pea soup, and separate tiny bowls of coconut milk, popadan, the large, potato-chip-like fried bread, hot tea with sugar and milk. It was all very good, I felt privileged to eat this in their home – they did not eat with us, would eat later, when fast was broken. After finishing the meal, his two sons, age about 14 and 12, took us out in a large flat bottomed boat, to fish, it had a motor. Their small home, built of cement blocks, was near the edge of an inlet from the Pacific ocean, set by itself, not in a village. We went carefully through the shallow river out into the ocean, but not over the far-off reef. It was about 6:30 p.m. when we went out, sun still up. We fished with hand lines, wound on a wheel-like reel, with cut bits of fish for bait. Jessie and I both like to fish, we did, it was just getting dusk, I caught the first fish! It was just big enough to keep, then Jess caught several. What a treat, to be out on the ocean as it got dusk, then fishing under the ½ moon for 1 and ½ hours. Returning in the darkness to Mohammed's house was a bit tricky, the tide was going out, it was shallow in spots and one boy had to pole the boat at times. Mohammed stood by the shore, holding a lantern, to guide us in. What a unique, native experience. As Mohammed drove us back toward the resort, he flashed his lights at a car ahead, knew it was his friend who lived near the resort, asked him to drive us back and save Mohammed the long trip, which he did. Back at the restaurant, we enjoyed a glass of beer while we watched the evening show. It was put on by local people, they sang, danced, had colorful native costumes, sometimes wreaths of leaves in their hair, etc. It was excellent entertainment, with young and old people. I did record some of the singing.

### **WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 23**

We all were of the impression this was Thursday morning, and started getting things ready for leaving here – then realized it was only Wednesday. When you don't have a newspaper, calendar or pay attention to date, because of your work schedule, it is easy to "loose" a day. We were a day early, will have this extra day to enjoy here. I hired a driver, for the small sum of 4 FD each way, to go to a nearby handicraft shop, we all wanted to see their craft work. I bought a small boat, carved out of wood, found another t-shirt, a native type sulu, a cloth wrapper to wear over a bathing suit, a carved item for Jessie, and a tea towel. Web found patches for my travel hat, got me one for New Zealand, and one for Fiji, it was fun shopping, looking at everything. On return to the resort we watched a group playing volleyball in the pool. I checked out scuba diving around here, the dive shop instructor suggested I put on the equipment, and go to the bottom of the pool and try it out. I

put on mask, tank, regulator, vest, etc. He was a bit careless, I thought, he put rocks into two pockets of the BC vest, for weights. He had no weight belt for me. I tried to submerge, but floated to the surface and the rocks fell out. I complained, then he went for a weight belt, but I thought he was very careless in preparing someone for a scuba dive, and decided I did not want to do a dive with him out in the rough ocean. Diving can be dangerous, if proper precautions are not observed. I showed him my authorized PADI card, said I had dived a lot. He didn't charge me for use of the equipment, so I said I would give him my shirt from the dive shop in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. That made him happy.

The wind came up very strong in the afternoon, but Jessie and I went into the sea to look at corals. I told her to use my mask, I used the borrowed one and we went snorkeling. Using a mask that didn't leak, she saw corals and fish much better, but with the strong wind, the current was hard to battle, we progressed slowly, and then came in to shore. There was a bar-b-q lunch served at noon today, so much food, but I took only salad and fruit, have been eating too much. The buffet meals are fabulous, set up so beautifully, the selection is generous, and different every day. With the constant breeze here, one is comfortable, but if sitting directly in the sun, it is very hot. The water temperature is delightful. I treated my friends to dinner tonight, have enjoyed their company on this trip – and all of Wilbur's driving in New Zealand. We watched the evening show, it is different every night, then retired.

#### **THURSDAY FEBRUARY 24**

Slept very well, on awakening enjoyed lying in bed and looking out at the surf on the reef, ¼ mile from shore – also hearing the mynah birds up in the trees, making their loud calls. They are about the size of a crow, have very dark feathers with a hint of green, and have a yellow bill. There are quite a few seen each day. I went into the ocean quite early, to snorkel, the tide was going out, water was calm, did see a variety of corals and many fish. At 10:00 a.m., two of the staff and 10 other patrons here, plus myself, went into the shallow water with a long, rectangular net, to try and catch fish the native way. The men went ahead, put the stretched net down in the water, held it tight, then the rest of us walked toward it, splashing the water, trying to drive small fish into it. No luck!. We tried it again, at 2 different places, but caught no fish. It was fun anyway. I have seen natives doing this in other islands I've visited.

After this event, we were invited to attend a real Fiji meal, down on a grassy area beyond the edge of the resort. People from the staff did everything from "scratch". One man husked a coconut, showed how to split it in half easily, save the water for use in cooking the fish. He shredded the fresh coconut inside by turning it round and round, against a board with a piece of metal on the end. The biggest one of the musicians who played at the resort, was the one who did the coconut, some of the rest played for us while the meal was being prepared. Part of a very big fish (with a forked tail) was cut up and cooked in the coconut water, along with onion and tomato slices. Vegetables were being prepared over a fire. A young man cut a huge green palm frond from a tree, slit it lengthwise, laid one half on top of the other, on the ground, and food was put on it. There was coconut soup served first, then fish, vegetables, sweet potato and cassava (yellow in color), various salads and

fresh fruits. We sat on woven mats and ate, the musicians played and sang. What a nice, cultural treat!

Now it was early evening, we finished packing everything, preparatory to leaving our bungalow, and be driven the 2 hour ride to the Nadi airport, our plane to Honolulu leaves at 1:55 a.m. Our driver friend Mohammed, drove us, we had rain as we arrived, it was warm and muggy. We checked bags right through to Los Angeles, though we have a stop in Honolulu. The airport waiting area was air conditioned, we played cards during our wait. Mohammed has handled our luggage, he was very helpful during, our stay in Fiji, of course serving tourists is the way he makes his living. We left Fiji on time, I was sleepy, am seated in row 44, Jess and Web in row 71. Just had a glass of wine, served by the hostess, will try to sleep.

Later: an episode I never had before, in all my world plane flights. The girl next to me, from Scotland, was friendly at first, but let me know she was sorry she could not be seated next to her friends, 2 other girls and a young man. I tried to sleep, did relax, but about 3 times she crawled over my legs and went to find her friends, said she could not sleep on a plane. Well, she and her friends evidently drank vodka and orange juice all night – at breakfast time she returned to her seat, was very drunk, pawed over me and also the lady on her other side, fell forward onto her tray of food, could not be roused. Finally we complained to the steward, found the girl and friends had disturbed everyone around them all night. When we arrived in Honolulu we deplaned, these people were really intoxicated, were separated from other passengers, and reprimanded severely by the Quantas Airline staff. Then we were given different seat assignments for flight to Los Angeles. This was a different experience in traveling, for me, never had problems before. The flight to LAX was 4 hours 40 minutes from Honolulu, after a short layover. It was good, we had a meal of mahi mahi and vegetables, saw a movie, wine was served with the meal. When I am traveling in foreign countries where drinking water may not be safe, I will drink beer for hydration, learned this from a travel guide. The beer is pasteurized in bottles, it is of acid content, microbes cannot live in it. Also will buy bottled water, but not in out-of-the way places where it might not be safe.

We arrived at 6:25 p.m. in Los Angeles, our baggage came through promptly, passed through immigration easily, quickly, no questions asked. This was the fastest entry I ever made, back into the U.S., usually they ask many questions, what do you declare, where have you been, how long have you been out of the country, etc. There were not the numerous employees asking, checking, I was hand carrying a shopping bag with a very large chunk of coral from Fiji, that I found lying on the beach. It was wrapped in tissue, in the bag, they never even inspected it. After passing through, I had to go to Quantas agent in that area, to secure my paring knife. It had been taken from me when seen on x-ray, as my purse went through the machine in Nadi airport. I had forgotten it was there, I usually carry one when I travel, to cut an apple, or cheese to eat. They put it in a security envelope, you must pick it up on arrival at your destination. Jessie and Web came through immigration easily too, then we all picked up our luggage on the carousel, put them on carts and exited the terminal. I showed them where to stand, to be picked up by the Hotel Marriot van, where they would stay overnight, then fly on tomorrow to their home in Key West, Florida. I stood at my stop, for the bus to Thousand Oaks, and did see them board the Marriott vehicle,

before my bus came along. I had an hour ride to my city, called son-in-law Steve from the hotel where the bus stops, and he picked me up, delivered me to 248 Dryden Street, my home. Mary and Steve live 3 houses from me. This was a great trip, but it's always good to get home. I always take the Great American Stage bus service from the airport, then family picks me up – if they are out of town, I call a cab.

This long trip through New Zealand, and short time in Fiji, was fun and so educational. I took many slides, hope they all turn out well. I will have another title to add to my long list of countries that I lecture on in my slide shows "Whizzing Around The World With Irma". My friends Wilbur and Jessie were happy with the trip.

By Irma Kackert age 78 (typed on computer, age 87)