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Notes of a Tourist

Aboard the Nieuw Amsterdam

At sea, off the coast of Florida
February 13, 1939

We have always liked the people of Lawrence, and of the surrounding country, but I have often wondered how much that feeling was reciprocated. Perhaps everyone feels that way at times. We wonder whether we are merely tolerated, or whether someone really cares for us.

Perhaps it was this feeling that has made Mrs. Simons and me so deeply appreciative of the many kindnesses shown us during the days preceding our departure for a trip around South America. We received so many personal expressions of good will, and carried with us so many letters to be read upon the boat, that it has made the good people of our home town seem dearer to us than ever.

It was cold when we left, yet there were friends at the depot to bid us goodbye and God speed. The train stopped for so short a time and there were so many bags to put on, that we found too little time to really express our appreciation.

The ride to Chicago was clean, but very rough. The automobile, buses and trucks, have brought keen competition to the railroads; and government by blocs, cliques and theorists have increased operating expenses to the point where little is left for the care of road beds.

A heavy rain had fallen in Chicago, which had largely disposed of the snow that had been piled upon the edges of the walks in order to clear the streets for traffic.

The morning papers told of the death of Pope Pius XI, a man whose ministry covered a most strenuous period in the life of the Catholic church. He was a man of peace and steadfastness, yet he lived to see his church almost disappear from Spain, and to be threatened with extinction in Germany. The New York Times of Sunday, February 12, carried a life size portrait of the pope on its first page and gave many pages to his life and works.

We phoned greetings to my sister, Mrs. Hoinville, while at the Chicago depot and as we went to the train Mr. Hoinville was there with a gardenia for Mrs. Simons. We have fared richly in the matter of flowers, several beautiful bouquets being delivered to our stateroom within a short time after we embarked.

On our way from Chicago to New York we could not help overhearing a loud voiced middle aged man, who sought to entertain and interest a picked up acquaintance. Evidently he succeeded, for her laugh could be heard thruout the car. The girl, who sat across from us in the diner, positively had the largest hands we have ever seen on a woman. ~~Pat Maloney and Otto Fischer do not have tiny hands, yet either could have his hand palmed in hers, as one would clasp the hand of a baby.~~ If there is any woman among our readers who has big hands, she can say with permission that we saw a woman with hands twice as large.

The New York Central railway follows the east bank of the Hudson river from Albany to New York, and from Yonkers into the city it is not an inspiring sight. It is not so bad when you can look across the river at the Palisades, but Saturday morning the country had been drenched with rain, and one could see but a little way.

We walked thru the luxurious tunnel from the Grand Central station, about a quarter of a mile, to the Commodore hotel, where at two o'clock we took a bus for the pier in Hoboken. These bus drivers are clever, they can part a man's hair without touching his scalp, and taking all kinds of chances they rarely have an accident.

While at breakfast we saw a girl who looked like Virginia Bruce, the movie star, but she seemed somewhat older than Virginia does on the stage. That, however, would not be strange for she was the first wife of John Gilbert, and has a grown child.

The Nieuw Amsterdam claims to be the largest and finest boat in the South American cruise service. If one end were at the Eldridge hotel, the other end would be down to Ober's or the Spot Cash shoe store and its eighty foot width would nearly fill Massachusetts street, while its height of ~~fifty~~ ^{five} feet would tower above any building on the street, ~~unless it might be the hotel.~~

Taking the word of a sailor, the boat makes eighteen miles an hour, but there are no stops for oil or meals, and we cover nearly four hundred and fifty miles every twenty-four hours. I have noticed

no boats on the left, or port side but have seen many on the starboard. This probably is because most of the boats we see are of lighter draught. Land may have been visible somewhere, but I have not seen it.

There are about six hundred passengers aboard, and seven hundred and twenty members of the crew. We see men who look as if the boat belonged to them; old men with young women; old women in slacks and hair in more colors than the rainbow, but on the whole we have found folks delightful, the members of the crew attentive, and all enjoying every hour of the day and night. When we hit the hay about 11 o'clock the beds are soft and inviting.

W.E.