

4-20-74  
Dan & Evelyn

Dear Folks,

We seem to have become Pacific commuters, for here we are again in Canberra after having left just a year ago to return to Palo Alto for ten months before coming back. These months seemed to melt away as the days were filled with the multiplicity of chores that come up when you own property. In the Spring when the garden came to life, the duties were multiplied, but gardening is a pleasant and healthful activity in the fresh air and sunshine. A dry April ushered in an early hose routine. A major project to remodel a garage for a lab and workshop, plus organized storage, was completed with great success, largely due to Norman's ingenuity in using bits and pieces he found among the things Muriel had saved on the score that they "might be useful sometime". The basic remodelling was done by a builder by contract and Muriel's brother did the wiring.

However, we did have a welcome change in the form of a business-pleasure trip to Oregon and Washington in June. Friends enroute entertained us, and Norman contacted several professional colleagues. A highlight was a visit to see a boyhood friend of Norman's, Dr. Herbert Bowles, and his wife, Gertrude, in their charming summer cottage on the Stehekin River at the head of 50-mile-long Lake Chelan where access is only by a four-hour launch trip -beautiful!- leaving one's car in Chelan. At Stehekin we saw the flowering of summer in sight of snow fields on the high peaks of the North Cascades. Herbert and Gertrude gave us a wonderful week, and it was a pleasure to repay such hospitality with an illustrated talk to the people of that isolated community at their Park Center. Homeward bound, we spent a day at Crater Lake. Norman had never seen this wonder of nature, and, the weather co-operating, we have some good photo mementos, and some of the rest of our trip, as well.

Norman accepted a nine-months Research Fellowship at Australian National University to further his studies in Australian anthropology. After a mad rush in July-August we left San Francisco on a Qantas 747. Four days in Nandi, Fiji, fortified us for a 22-hour day from early rising in Fiji to a late retiring the same day after a dinner party in Canberra, followed in a day by a 1700-mile round trip in our last year's car to Adelaide where Norman gathered books and data for his work. We saw our families in Blackwood and Loxton. This was an especially beautiful trip, for this winter and spring have had record rainfall and the country was lush green. There were lovely grazing scenes and great expanses of wheat were already heading out.

A special pleasure has been the opportunity to spend research time and visit with Dr. and Mrs. J.B. Birdsell of UCLA, whose own ANU Fellowship overlaps ours by three months. They cared for our car while we were away.

In mid-October Jo and Norman took important parts in a special symposium on Aboriginal organization and had great opportunities to meet again and confer with colleagues from many parts of the world. The contributions were keenly debated and are to be published as a volume in the Research School of Pacific Studies.

We have a comfortable five-room flat at University House on the campus, with room to entertain. We meet many people in various fields of activity from all over the world. Our stay here is made more pleasant by the beauty of this city and its environs (smog free!). Canberra is a planned city, centred around a graceful wandering lake with bays for sail boats and shoreline parks. The planted trees, shrubs, and flowers, now in flourishing maturity, are a delight in effective landscaping that complements the contours of the undulating valley and makes a handsome setting for fine public buildings and residential suburbs. A dramatic "backdrop" is the nearby Brindabella Range, looking purple at times, and the skies of wonderful clouds in cycles of frequently changing spring moods which are sometimes more like winter. The gracefully flowing streets, roundabouts, and the interchanges take some getting-used-to for a driver who all her life has driven from the left side of the car on the right side of the street!

Some Australian travel is in our plans. We hope to be back to Palo Alto next July with more time to enjoy our American relatives and friends.

We wish you all as happy a year as has been our lot, and all that is good in the coming New Year.

Canberra, Australia - December 1973.

July 1974: 2314 Harvard St., Palo Alto, Ca. 94306 U.S.A.

Muriel and Norman  
Birdsell

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