My wife and I took a long-planned trip to Europe in 1931. Our traveling companions were our friends Paul and Margaret Miller. He was then in charge of the University's Agricultural School and Station at Morris. The three months' trip was marvelous. There were "Ah's" and "Oh's" a-plenty during the week spent in Paris, lovely Paris, and in other places. We had a delightful motor trip to Nice. Our driver, Marion Gray was a Chicago born World War I veteran who had married a French girl and remained in Paris. He spoke five languages. He knew all the highways and by-ways and could negotiate impossible corners in the narrow streets. He could turn on a dime, Miller often said. Best of all he could tell us of historic places, events and much else that he had found interested visitors.

After several days at Nice, we continued on to Genoa, Rome, Florence, Venice and Milan. We spent some days at Lucerne, Heidelberg, Amsterdam and Copenhagen before going to Norway.

That country was one of my main objectives as I wished to see where my parents lived before emigrating to America sixty years before. The Millers wished to spend more time in Scotland and England so we parted, temporarily, at Stavanger, where we remained a week before rejoining them in London.

As we neared the harbor at Stavanger I was on the deck, leaning against the rail with my eyes fixed on the city and the surrounding scene. I was filled with a strange emotion. Perhaps my countenance disclosed my inner feelings. At any rate an English woman who was near approached. She said, "I know what you are thinking of and how you feel. You are seeing for the first time your father's land. I have had the same feelings."

I located an eighty-odd year old friend of my mother's at Egersund. She said my mother was her closest girlhood friend. Still straight and spry at her age she went to a commode in her room and in the left corner of the bottom drawer picked up a small blue-colored box, hand carved and covered with hand-painted flowers. From it she extracted a small scroll tied with a blue ribbon. This was mother's gift to her girlhood friend. I was greatly moved.

We found father's home had become a summer resort located in a beautiful valley where Hogsfjord bends its way towards the mainland. We saw raspberry bushes which might have been from the stock my paternal grandmother planted and tended nearly one hundred years ago. We learned much we never had known before of Norway's history and of the great waves of emigrants that had gone forth to "America," land of promise and opportunity.

I described in the book, "Glimpses of Europe," which I wrote in 1931, what impressed me most, not only in the land of my ancestors, but everywhere we went. We were royally entertained at the homes of cousins, two of whom had resided in Minnesota many years. The visit was all too brief for both of us.

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The passage to Newcastle on the S.S. Jupiter was not to be to my liking. We left Stavanger Saturday evening. The weather was fair. A pleasant voyage was in prospect. The American Consul had taken us in charge and we met the ship's Captain. He expressed a wish we might have a visit together seeing that my father came from Stavanger and had been a sailor for many years. He would come to our cabin on the morrow. He did but we had no visit.

During the night a terrific storm arose over the North Sea. Off the coast of France the next day a passenger steamer foundered and sank bearing nearly 400 passengers to their watery graves. The Jupiter was only about 100 miles from this spot, as I recall reading in the London papers the next day.

Thus a storm caused me to lose my sea-legs, if any, and the captain's visit was called off. Just before leaving the ship, however, he sought me out to inform me, "I was busy today but toward evening I called at your cabin. You see, I wanted to keep my promise."

I am tempted to indulge myself by writing a chapter or two on the delights experienced during the trip but must refrain. We were a busy quartette in England. It was lovely June when the countryside was at its best. I must leave it at that.

One of our delightful visits later was at Rochester, New York, where my wife and I were guests of our former Northwest School's registrar and preceptor, Arthur H. Larson and his family. He was Registrar and Secretary of Eastman School of Music and this led to a most interesting visit to the home of George Eastman.

We had been invited to attend a Sunday evening string quartette program in which all the performers were artists of first rank. It was a beautiful program. Following it, we were guests of Mr. Eastman at the "supper" which followed the Sunday programs. Knowing my hearing deficiency Mr. Larson arranged for me to sit next to Mr. Eastman. Our conversation ranged far and wide. He told of his earliest experiments in Kodak, North Dakota, and of progress. His interest in music led him to establish the Eastman School of Music. He said, "I consider this use of my money will lead to the least disadvantage of anyone. One can't go far wrong in music." It was a delightful evening for both my wife and me.

At the conclusion of my service in Congress, we visited Florida and the next year California. During the summers up to 1941 we lived at our cottage at Cass Lake, Minnesota. For a person with an acute allergy for hard work this was altogether too easy and quiet a life for me. I had begun to be re-interested in stamp-collecting about this time. I enjoyed seeing my friend Paul Miller's fine collection of the early issues of U.S. stamps. My son, George, had become interested, also. I needed something to keep my mind active.

Recently Grandma Moses said to a convalescing woman, "Just keep your mind active my dear, and you'll be all right." I found stamp collecting interesting and fascinating. Naturally, I turned to all available sources to learn what it was all about. My counsellors were Paul Miller, Gerald Burgess and A. B. Cassell, the latter two from Minneapolis.

Stamp collecting can be a means of losing money fast. It took two years before I ventured to acquire additions to my collection. My counsellors inspected them first. I needed to learn and soon became deeply immersed in the fascinating hobby. It was just what was needed. My hearing handicap greatly lessened social intercourse. Study and work overcame that in part. Soon I was exhibiting my early issues of U.S. stamps
at stamp shows in Miami, St. Petersburg, Minneapolis, Santa Monica and Hollywood, where the collection was given full recognition by the judges.

My son, George and I visited prominent collectors in San Francisco, St. Paul, Washington, New Orleans and New York. There is a feeling of fraternity among hobbyists which heightens the pleasure. In San Francisco we called at the Crocker National Bank to talk stamps with its president, William H. Crocker, who had an unequalled collection of the early issues of Hawaii besides a well-known collection of early U.S. issues.

The vice-president informed us Mr. Crocker would not return until mid-afternoon, but if we’d leave a message the president would get it. “Oh, you’ll see his stamps, all right. Come at four o’clock.” We did. The book of the early Hawaiians was on his desk. To a collector it was a joy. Then he summoned one of his staff to escort us to the vaults where in two large safes were his stamps. We remained long after closing time.

4.

Reading was a favorite pastime during the fleeting years. For thirty years I had found very little time for reading as work occupied nearly all the time. I kept a record of books I wanted to read against the days I might have leisure. These days happily had arrived though I might have preferred the absence of a certain incumbrance (acoustic trauma). Hundreds of very delightful books were read. I started to make a list, but that chore soon became tiresome. I enjoyed re-reading Dickens’ novels and others I had read in youth. On an evening when my wife was sitting by, I would read to her Dickens’ incomparable descriptions or scenes. Those occasions are unforgettable.

It is a grave mistake ever to lose contact with friends if that can be prevented. Letter-writing in these days seems out-of-date and old-fashioned but that is not always true. I have not found it so. For many years I have enjoyed exchanging letters with friends and associates of long standing. I never became a writer-to-the-papers, but quite often have expressed my views to comment on utterances, opinions and views presented by the leading men and women of our country.

5.

When Honorable James R. Garfield, Cleveland, former secretary of Commerce, son of President James A. Garfield, was president of the American Hearing Society, I served for a brief period as vice-president and was assigned the national chairmanship of the Committee on Legislation.

A full account of activities then undertaken and later followed in California would require a book. My first step was to secure a syllabus or digest of existing state legislation relating to the deaf and the hard-of-hearing. I sought this from the Library of Congress where I had formed the habit of seeking similar information in other fields during my six years as a Congressman. My former colleague and friend for many, many years, Hon. Harold Knutson, later chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee, joined me officially in this request. It was granted. An employee who herself was hard-of-hearing, Miss Jennie Welland, prepared the digest.

Later Congressman Knutson at my request secured consent of the House of Representatives to have this digest of state laws affecting the acoustically handicapped printed as House Document No. 151. This was done on March 19, 1941. It was reprinted with up-to-date additions, as H.Doc. 154, March 27, 1943.

My wife and I traveled extensively over the United States in the interests of this
work. One evening we tried to recall the cities at which we spoke at meetings, luncheons or community dinners. The number added up to 45 meetings in 23 states. In 13 additional states, we had extensive correspondence with persons who were interested. This project required follow-up work. It really required the full-time efforts of at least one person, in addition to reimbursement for travel expenses. I could not give full-time service and was reluctant to be on the road all the time. The Society continued this project. Good progress has been made.

6.

The second World War period was one of anxiety at the Selvig home. Our three children were actively engaged abroad in three different services. Helen who had entered service in the State Department was transferred late in December, 1941 to the American Legation, Stockholm. This meant an Atlantic passage through enemy infested submarine area followed by air-flight from Edinburgh to Sweden, which was also extremely hazardous during that period. These were anxious days and nights for us. She served overseas three years.

Margaret became Red Cross Camp Director in northeastern India, near the western terminus of “The Hump” air flights. She was there nearly two years until the war ended. Later, she served in the same capacity with the Army Recreational Services in Korea. Long voyages in torpedo infested waters or long air flights did not contribute to her parents’ peace of mind.

George left in November, 1941, for a destination known only to his superior officers. It was strictly and absolutely, hush-hush. Bound for Singapore, he landed at Batavia, Java, and within two weeks was forced out by the attacking Japs.

The escape from Java smacked of adventure. A small group two days after the Jap invasion embarked for Perth, Australia on a 1200-ton vessel manned by refugee English sailors. He and his companions were finally allowed to come on board. They would sleep in the lifeboats on the deck. During one night the night-watch reported three torpedoes were fired at the ship. Two missed. The third came dead-center but it was too deep to hit the vessel’s hull.

From Perth he was ordered to Cairo and later served in Tunisia and Italy. He was promoted to captain at this time. From Italy he was transferred to join the Allied Mission to Yugoslavia under British Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean, of which Randolph Churchill, son of Winston Churchill, was also a member. We then learned George was with the O.S.S.

In Yugoslavia he became acquainted with Marshall Tito whom he describes as a magnetic leader. The Marshall entertained him at a Christmas dinner. A member of the Mission was author Evelyn Waugh. After the war he and his wife were guests of George and his wife in New York City. On that occasion George received a copy of Waugh’s “Scot-King’s Modern Europe,” his latest book at the time. I have George’s permission to quote what the author wrote on the fly-leaf:

“For George

an old-fashioned American
from Evelyn Waugh
an old-fashioned European.

To hell with Modern America,
To hell with Modern Europe.”

All the children returned safely from their service. Evenings at home during their visits were often spent in listening to their reminiscences. Whatever else war wrought it did bring more closely to us at home information from all parts of the world. If race prejudice can be smashed, probably there is hope for cooperation on a global basis. Lord Bryce once prophesied that a cure will be found for every social ailment except race prejudice. Recently a writer remarked that it is manifestly easier to smash an atom than a prejudice. Perhaps the millions of Americans who “have seen the world” will contribute to the creation of a better understanding of mutual problems amongst all peoples.

7.

An interesting incident occurred in Detroit, Michigan, far from Southern California, of which I was advised by my former secretary, Oscar L. Buhr, who for many years had been connected with the Detroit Trust Company. We have corresponded regularly during the intervening years. He wrote to tell me of a skit presented over radio WJM, Detroit, with characters representing him and me, two boys at school and a couple of men in the Detroit Trust Company.

From the script resume I gained that the story is of Oscar Buhr to whom I offered the job as secretary-registrar of the Northwest School of Agriculture in 1911. Oscar soon found his duties included coaching in basket ball, advising, and supervision of the boys, as well as being my secretary. He came upon all kinds of problems and all kinds of boys, helping and advising them with a warmth and understanding that was both wise and friendly, as well as inspiring to them. He found one boy at the school who presented a real problem. Oscar succeeded in leading him to become a splendid athlete, a fine student, and an all-around credit to everyone.

After five years at the school, the script continues, Oscar decided to follow Mr. Selvig’s advice and further his own education. He went to the University of Minnesota, and received a degree in business administration while working to support himself as secretary to President Marion L. Burton.

Later he became a clerk at Detroit Trust Company, was promoted again and again in 1934, he became vice-president in charge of the investment department. The skit went across very well, Oscar wrote me. They put on some scenes including the basket ball scene, dormitory scene and convocation scene, which were quite entertaining. I was highly pleased, of course, to learn that episodes of school life at Crookston should be broadcast.

8.

I now come to an event where reticence must rule. My wife passed away suddenly in 1949 due to a stroke. We had been happily married for more than forty-six years and were looking forward to our golden wedding anniversary. But it was not to be. She had complained of heart trouble and had frequently consulted our physician, Dr. M. A. Desmond, Santa Monica, a fellow townsman and school mate from Rushford, Minnesota, in whom we both had explicit confidence. She was too active for her inherent strength. We often talked about her “slowing down a bit” to save her heart. Her enthusiasm for life and service won over caution. Thus it goes. My mind was unable to comprehend the profound event that had occurred. I shall never forget the kindness of friends who came to our home to press my hand and to speak words of encouragement. She was loved by all. She won that love. She left us with a smile and a cheery word.
A Tale of Two Valleys

There is no poem that more clearly brings her to me these days than the one entitled “Orchestration” which appears on this page. It brings to me the music of her own words, her own voice. How I love to read this poem and to feel the old melodies “turn to break like silver on a beach.”

“There is no music that I have not heard moving beneath our strange unquiet speech,
Old melodies that tremble toward a word,
And turn to break like silver on a beach.
It is no wonder, then, if we be found
Listening beyond the casual things we say,
To flute and horns again and the far sound
Of strings whose players all are hushed away.

There ghostly bugles, blowing thin refrains
Seek here again the long belated ease
From old despairs that stirred their troubled strains;
And still such lingering interludes as these
Wake with faint bells whose tolling out of time
Haunts through our speech like ghostly chime on chime.”

Poem by David Martin, in Santa Monica Outlook, January 24, 1950, in “Lookout” column.

9.

Marion Elvira Wilcox was descended from early New England forbears. Her name is listed in Volume 5 of The Compendium of American Genealogy. Her father’s name was George A. Wilcox and her mother’s Mariette Minerva Rowe who died when Marion was four years old.

She lived with her uncle Benjamin J. Taber and her aunt Lottie until we were married at their pleasant country home named “Maple Shade Farm” near Mabel, Minnesota. She grew up with her cousin, Mary Taber. There could never be a person more lovable and understanding than Mary. The two girls played together. They hunted wild flowers together. Their home as a shrine to them and later to me.

I would like for my readers to know more about Mary Taber. I have a letter about “Tommie” which tells much about Mary Taber, also, she is now nearing eighty but she is young! She is indeed young!

TOMMIE

“Poor Tommie stopped breathing about 7 o’clock this eve. Old Tommie’s death isn’t just a common cat death. He was Vern’s cat and Vern was very fond of him. He sat on the arm of Vern’s chair when he read the evening paper.

“If all were away in the evening Vern would give Tommie the cream off the milk and that meant the coffee cream was used but Vern drank his coffee black. When Mrs. Antrim would take Vern to task for it he’d say, ‘Tommie likes cream’ and that was like Tommie’s whole life.

“To me Vern was a concrete illustration of Henry Van Dyke’s ‘The Other Wise Man’. It is said that there is always someone to take the place of those who leave us. No one has ever taken Marion’s, Min’s or Vern’s place (cousins) in my world. It has never been the same since they left.
"Clifford is so upset over Tommie’s death he can’t study. He feels worse because he is afraid he gave Tommie too much liver the day before. Thinks he killed him with kindness. Well, that is a good way. I told him it wasn’t that, Tommie has been very ill for a year.

“You know, I think my heart is about the best piece of anatomy I have. You see, I’ve never worried it any. I never get mad because I always figured that would only hurt me, and it wouldn’t hurt the other fellow at all.”

I was led to read “Youth” by Joseph Conrad through a note in the Sunday New York Times recently. Perhaps you remember, “Oh Youth! The strength of it, the faith of it, the imagination of it! To me she was not an old rattletrap carting about the world a lot of coal for a freight — to me she was the endeavor, the test, the trial of life.”

I felt that way in my youth. It was a wonderful period. I loved it. Joseph Conrad says more: “I remember my youth and the feeling that will never come back any more — the feeling that I could last forever, outlast the sea, the earth, and all men; the deceitful feeling that lures us to joys, to perils, to love, to vain effort — to death; the triumphant conviction of strength, the heat of life in the handful of dust, the glow in the heart that with every year grows dim, grows cold, grows small, and expires, too soon — before life itself.”

I am reminded, also, of a motto placed on my desk at Crookston, “It is better to wear out than to rust out,” spoken by our great President, Theodore Roosevelt, whom I always admired. I am reminded of the words of Horace Mann, now permanently placed beneath his portrait at the National Education Building in Washington, “Be afraid to die until you have won some victory for humanity.”

I am reminded of the prayer spoken by Reverend Peter Marshall when he was chaplain of the United States Senate: “When we cannot convince, let us be willing to persuade for small things done are better than great things planned.”

Democracy will become a pitiful mockery if its offices are administered by people whose loftiest ambition is to make no mistakes. We need men and women with faith in God and in the goodness of men, undying devotion to our country and courage. Thus we may hope for the continuance of liberty, the cherished possession which escapes us if we cease our endeavors to secure and maintain it.

We cannot insure our own liberty except by insuring that of everyone else. If you wish to be happy you must yourself strive to making others, also, happy. A country lives or dies within the hearts of its own citizens.

“The harvest of old age”, said Cicero, “is the recollection and abundance of blessings previously secured”. Cicero wrote of the blessings of serenity achieved and of the philosophical mind.

Dr. Anton (Ajax) Carlson, internationally known physiologist must have had Cicero’s words in mind when he recently gave his views on “abundance of blessings previously secured”. On the eve of his seventy-fifth birthday he gave his philosophy, expressed pungently which is characteristic of him. He said, “The goal of current philosophy of the welfare state — security from cradle to grave whether you work or not — is both unscientific and unobtainable. The three W’s and the three D’s of living are work, work, work from diaper days til death.” There is much to be
said for his views. He knows the body's needs. The mind and spirit, too, benefit from the body's activity. We'll let it go at that.

12.

Striving for supremacy has always been the bane of nations and the cause of their downfall in the past. Power is what each one wants. We hear less than we should about unselfish service. We do less than is necessary to place Christian principles upon a pedestal and strive to follow them. Christian humility and forbearance may well be set before us all to practice.

I recall my first visit to Washington. There stands the Washington Monument. It is majestic in its greatness. It personifies the stature of the man whom it honors. There stands, also, the beautiful temple dedicated to the memory of Abraham Lincoln. The shrine is visited by citizens of all nations. Two immortal messages are inscribed on its inner walls. Mural paintings point to epochal events. Then there is the life-like statue of the Great Emancipator. Thrills go through me every time I go there. He wrote of dedication to unfinished tasks. We need re-dedication every day of our lives for there is still much to be done.

Our trusted leaders cry out to the multitudes today as did the prophets of old. Many failed to listen then and met disaster. We can learn from the past and we must. We need now to renew our faith in ourselves and our government. Faith must be emphasized. It forms the foundation for decision, action, policy. We can't buy peace. We must regain confidence in our spiritual heritage.