

Global Odyssey (the first of several)

Right after the North Shore Cadre's decision to move to Lake Forest (in 1969) the decision is made to view the globe "up-close-and-personal." Joseph Mathews had suggested this. We divide into teams for each part of the globe to research and plan the around-the-world itinerary in the spring of 1970. This journey will take us to Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Calcutta, Banaras, Agra, Cairo, Athens, Rome, Paris, London and home in twenty-one days.

Two women from the Institute come to the Wilson house to care for the younger children. They follow the trip as well as they can with décor and meals.

The Odyssey begins with our landing in Tokyo first. Each day begins with a brief worship and reflection on the previous day.

Japan was the first stop. A couple of places the first day started our understanding...the Kamakura, a tea ceremony, the Kabuki and a geisha dinner. Marilyn Oyler, the Morrills and Quimbeys were our dinner guests. The next day we were on our own and we covered many places including church and the zoo. Dinner on the train on the way to Kyoto was a treat. We had a view of the mountains, including Mt Fuji on our right and the ocean on our left. A tour of Kyoto includes visiting the Expo '70 in Osaka. We finish the day with dinner at the Coles house.

Each morning begins with a conversation which starts our day in Hong Kong. During that meeting the Cadre celebrates Priscilla Wilson's birthday.

Hong Kong is crucial as a trade center. We did some shopping, but also took a New Territories Tour and walked up to look at Red China while there. The land looks the same but significant to look through that port hole. We visited Nai Wang and Dottie Kwok's church. We attended the Maundy Thursday worship service at his church. The roof of their building is the only place that we can really see the

internal dimension of Chinese life. When we stopped at the Resettlement Estates the people begging was hard for us to take. This was the first of seeing the begging.

The next stop, Cambodia to see Angkor Wat really hits the group hard. We had all looked forward to that part of the trip. But unfortunately Cambodia closes its airport the day we are to fly there and leaves it closed for the next thirty years. We are most frustrated and discuss all kinds of ways to get there anyway. Finally, we realize that we can't do that so we drop the subject.

We spend Easter in Bangkok plus we take the motor launch to the Floating Market. We also visit a plethora of Buddhist temples and monasteries. We took a bus to Ayudhya, an ancient capitol with temple ruins. We spend a couple of extra days in Bangkok before we head toward Calcutta.

Calcutta hits us. After landing at Dum Dum Airport (since renamed) life on the streets of Calcutta nearly stops us as we drive to the Oberoi Hotel. More people than the population of our hometowns swamp the Howrah Bridge crossing the Hooghly River.

Later that day on a walk a beggar woman confronts us saying, "Baby sick, baby dying." We shutter as we realize the baby is already dead. We walk on. A male beggar with no hands, only stumps, paws one of us. Beyond him we glimpse a beggar boy of seven or eight, holding a transistor radio chained to a pillar to beg.

That boy with the transistor holds the world. Is he possibly aware that the Americans walking by use five hundred times more of this earth's overburdened resources than he does?

We didn't realize that one of our guides had asked us not to go out on the street because of the demonstrations following the attempted assassination of one of

the Communist leaders.

Later one group goes out to Home of the Dying, Sister Teresa's place. They meet the needs of the dying. The other group takes a private car to drive through the railway station.

Brother Andrew visits us. About 1965 Brother Andrew began working with a group of brothers to meet the needs of the poorest.

India causes us to weep in the depths of our being. Any romanticism in our souls dies as we witness overwhelming destitution and innocent suffering.

In Banares we go to the Ganges River and visit the Burning Ghats at dawn. Women who have died are brought to the burning ghats wrapped in color...usually pink or red. Men are in white. Families designate a mourner who burns the body. Four kinds of bodies are never burned, small children under five, holy men, persons dying from leprosy or smallpox. They are thrown in the sacred river Ganges.

Pilgrims come to the river early to bath and meditate as the sun comes up. We experienced a sense of mystery and peace on the boat on the Ganges. I was not repulsed by the bodies at the burning ghats.

Walking through the very narrow streets of old Varnasi was very offensive. The smell of urine and dung nearly caused physical illness. The drive through the streets full of cycles, cows, oxcarts and pedestrians was scary. Drivers just honk and go.

The five hour car and bus ride to Delhi was fascinating but very hot and bumpy and several were beginning to feel ill. The stop between Banaras and Agra reminded me of a very small town in western Oklahoma or New Mexico. Sitting in front of our hotel in Agra early morning I was reminded of a motel where I had stayed in New Mexico. The flowers were snap dragons, petunias, phlox, nasturtiums, larkspur and pansies. It seemed odd to say we were in India.

A stop in Agra allows time for us to visit the Taj Mahal, a great shrine of

love. It is the most dimensionally perfect edifice ever built.

While in Delhi we take a trip to a village outside of the city, see the Red Fort, Gandhi's tomb and a Temple. That evening we attend a Hindu dinner, a concert and a dance performance.

India is the birthplace of four religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Other religions present in India are Muslims, Christian, Parsees and Animistic Cults.

We spend five hours in Beirut on our way to Cairo. While there we take a bus tour to the Museum and along the seacoast of the Mediterranean. The Museum has artifacts from the Phoenician period and the Roman period.

There is evidence of military everywhere and we are warned where not to take photos. Exploration of the Egyptian Museum we see the glass cases are taped to protect them from bombing. Sandbags are piled in some halls. Amonofes III, a 16th century BC ruler honored women and didn't keep his queen in the background. He had her picture painted life size to show equality. We then made a journey out to the sphinx and pyramids capping our time there. A number of us rode camels near the pyramids.

In order to fly to Rome the group gets up in the middle of the night to go to the airport and discovers that the airlines have changed their schedules. Rodney Wilson and Sheldon Hill negotiate with the airlines...and talk through many possibilities. Finally, we spend half a day in Athens with a bus, before flying on to Rome. We are in Athens long enough to see an overview and the Parthenon.

Like everywhere we've been, our time in Rome is partly as a group with a guide and partly off on our own. St. Peter's is one example of that.

Our celebration in Rome one evening includes Martin Pesek dancing on one of the tables. We realize that we are excited to be back in the “white man’s” territory.

Our time in both Paris and London is fun although we realize that it is not as strange to us as the first part of the trip.

The North Shore Cadre struggles to capture the reality of what we have experienced. This Global Odyssey is the first of several more Global Odysseys.

Staggering from culture shock, those twenty-one days showered us with overwhelming life changing experiences. The fact that ten percent of the world’s population make up “the haves” leaving ninety percent as the “have not’s” is not an abstract idea. (Today the numbers keep spreading wider and more frightening.)