

July 16, 1971

Dear friends, cousins, and whoever wants to know about us:

Being back in the States for almost one week, I know that I h a v e to write this report, and write it n o w. Not only do I have to get it out ^{of/} my system, but also because I want to convey to you who have over the years always taken an interest in our rather eccentric young ones what our own feelings are after returning from this eventful journey. We have not only met our grandson Jonah, born April 29, for the first time. We have also met our children Steven and Janet in an entirely different surrounding, in a new country, in a new profession, in a NEW LIFE. When we parted from each other last year in June, we leaving for Europe, they leaving for the camp job in Canada, we did not know where we would meet again and under what circumstances. The year is over, many wonderful experiences have occurred ~~to us~~ last year by being united with all our friends, cousins and other relatives, and seeing the old continent in its full glory. The letters which reached us regularly from our two adventurers kept us on our toes practically for the whole year. One never knew what would be next, once it was the dreamy island off Vancouver Island, called Denman's Island, where they thought they found their paradise. But due to many factors, and may be providence, they moved on, Janet being in her 5th month, landed at the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia, which is 4-5 hrs. ferry crossing or $\frac{1}{2}$ hour flying time from Vancouver. We received numerous excited letters, cards, descriptions of virgin forest, reporting the purchasing of some 40 acres of ~~of~~ wood-land, with the idea of clearing *part of* the land and building on it etc. etc. All of these letters sounded like this part of the world must still be like paradise, unspoilt, unpolluted, something to grab now, before it is too late. The fact that the deal with the land purchase was called off, and at the same time, of course the \$200.00 retainer fee was lost, made us aware that

the end was not in sight yet! On the day when they received the letter that at last our good Grandma Elise had died in her sleep, Steven called, greatly moved by the news and the strange coincidence that on this day, when mother had died they had the opportunity to buy a farm, fully equipped, with farmhouse, mostly furnished, even deep-freezer, barn, chickens, rabbits, etc. and 36 acres of the most unbelievable piece of land we could imagine. With a downpayment of \$ 1500.00 he made the deal and they were moving right into their house. Timberland, cleared vegetable-area, a brook running all through the property, a mountain with a sun-deck on top where one can jump into a pond, a cabin which can be rented out all this they described to us in such glowing terms that we felt they must have been doing something right. And now returning from there, and having seen a great deal of beautiful British Columbia, we must admit they did not exaggerate. Since the whole object with house, electricity, hot water, WC, Telephone, washing machine and a rather modern kitchen (but a leaking roof) amounted to just \$20,000 with a monthly payment of \$150.- we still think they have a good buy. Time will prove if this is right. So far they do not make a living yet but live on savings, part time jobs in the forest service, and barter trade with neighbors, friends, fishermen etc. This is the truth, and they realize that they took a great responsibility upon themselves - but they always said, they need challenge! Now they have it.

We spent the first 24 hours after our arrival in Vancouver alone. We needed a breathing spell and prepared ourselves for what was coming the next day. Since the weather in Vancouver was not too favorable at our arrival, we spent the first few hours after we found a very good reasonable hotel for the first night, at the beautiful new Centennial Museum. It is mostly Indian history and the development of the North West, still one of the newest parts of the Western Hemisphere. When ~~we~~ ^{we} then following day at 5 p.m. arrived in Powell River, after a beautiful half hour flight in one of the small local planes, our family stood there, the farmers, with son Jonah! Well, fortunately this moment was not as emotion-packed

as I was afraid it would be. We all kept our senses, once we had unloaded our various bags, one completely filled with gifts from friends and relatives, we climbed into the red van, equipped with benches, and headed for the farm which is abt. 17 miles from the Powell River airport. We passed through the town, a nice sized clean beautifully located lumber town, the big McMillan-Bloedel lumber mill, the biggest in the world, makes the paper for the N.Y. Times! All of the area more or less lives off this mill. At the moment business is not good even in B.C. and many people have lost their job at the mill. But Steven is on the waiting list, and, hopefully, after 6 or 8 months, he may have a chance to get a job. Once we drove along the highway out of the town, we saw the tremendous wealth this area has, timber of all ages. Of course like all over the world, the real big old trees had already been sacrificed to make more newsprint - if it is worth ~~the~~ to have all this natural wealth cut down for the lousy news, is another question... Still, there is plenty of good old timber around, and once we started to pass Steve's land, I just could not believe it - that anybody who is not a wealthy person, could own that kind of land! May be this is the first time that in this family of ours anybody owned land of any considerable size. We just hope they can make a success out of their hard work they put in, and we must give, in spite of some misgivings regarding the disruption of their teaching career, credit and admire the courage which made them go into this venture. Once walking the land and really seeing what is included in this deal, it really blows your mind.

Jonah, our sweet little grandson, was busy sucking his mothers breasts. One did not even ^{know} he was around on this trip home from the airport. None of us would have noticed that she was nursing him, that's the way she handles it. Wherever we went, visiting, 3 days in Victoria in the hotel, in the restaurant, in the movie, Jonah was along, and when he cried he knew where to go for food! Nobody would have suspected what was going on under that blanket which covered him and his mother!

Getting off the highway the road leads very bumpy to the house, but the first sign of their home is the blue mail-box standing on the highway, saying: Steven and Janet Marx. We still could not believe that it was all true. Once we found our way out of the van and into the little "Knusperhaeuschen", we knew that we at last had arrived at our first destination. For dinner we had fresh caught salmon, baked ~~in~~ in the oven, Japanese noodles, salad (partly own product), home-made bread baked by Janet and a fruit-cake which she also had baked for our arrival, all organic food without chemicals. The salmon alone was a dream, and we ate the ~~kak~~ whole big thing. Salmon or other fish is their main protein supply. They get it free from friends who have their fishing boats right near by, they are architects from Vancouver, who take the summer off for fishing! We ate in a spacious dining room, at a table which Steven had made out of logs, a real sturdy piece of furniture which can take any weight and serves for all purposes, even as a massage-table, when he had a back-ache and his mother gave him a massage. (Everybody was watching this event, and they all wanted to learn it!) After getting more acquainted with little Jonah and unpacking all the many beautiful things which came from New York, we just sat and talked and we marvelled at the knowledge these 2 people have acquired regarding lumber, animals, building, feed-prices etc. as if they would never have been teaching 16th and 17th century English! They say that t h i s is their education and that all the "crap" they learned at the universities is worth nothing if you want to live the life they plan for themselves. Again - time will show, if they are right. We can fully understand that they want to raise their child in such an environment, away from all city life, but for us it would not be the life we want. It is beautiful for 10 days or even more, but then we city slickers have to get back to civilization and the beauty of Victoria, Vancouver etc.

Aside from the fact that the rain comes in through the roof (and there was more rain this year than anybody liked) plus a few other missing amenities of civilization like central heating, which makes it necessary to start the fire in the pot-belly oven, and before, cutting logs (a job done by Henry every morning, who claimed he loved to do it!) our farmer family lives, compared to other young people of the new breed, luxuriously. They have electricity, scalding hot water, WC (although one is not allowed to flush everytime one uses the toilet!) telephone, bottle gas, deep freezer (with not too much in it at the moment, since they had just started planting the vegetables, and the weather was so bad that things are very far behind) electr. ice-box w/ freezer, a washing-machine with wringer and a fire-place in the large, comfortable living-room. There are - after entering the house through the kitchen, a large dining-room, study, living-room and bathroom, sun-porch, ^{with large windows} ~~glass-covered~~, upstairs (the first 3 stairs being tree-trunks) then the stairs begin,) are 2 bedrooms plus an attic, roses are growing into the windows, our room had 2 double beds, ~~was~~ some cupboards for our belongings, mostly orange grates, but they had built some closets and had wall-papered the upstairs which must have been in bad condition when they moved in in the middle of the winter. The "master-bedroom" with a double-bed, little Jonah's crib and a chest of drawers, plus a chair and some shelves form the content of the sleeping-quarters, everything was bought at Goodwill or Salvation Army, and considered the money they had to spend and what they paid for the things, it could be a lot worse! The house has definitely possibilities and is worth improving, part of it is 80 years, part of it 15 years old, the kitchen is rather modern and well equipped from its previous owner who left most of the equipment there. It goes without saying that for us, at first, coming from New York and an orderly 3½-room apartment, the whole thing ^{was used} ~~was~~ a "culture-shock". The second day one is used to it and to the Bohemian way of life of our eccentric family. Even Henry, who at home is more than a perfectionist, adjusted himself admirably to the new situation. He was the permanent dishwasher, cleaner-upper, wood-cutter, he helped feeding the pig, the chicks, the goat and the rabbits as if he had done it all his life! We even got used to make sure that all garbage was separated in "organic", "paper" and "for the pig", and one is aware how much unnecessary packaging and ~~how much~~ waste is committed in our cities where one does not give any thoughts to salvaging anything. Farming is an education in economy, appreciation of nature and weather-conditions, as we rarely are aware of.

Since Janet is breastfeeding, and the house is constantly filled with all kinds of visitors, human and animal, I was happy to be able to do my share and really worked harder than I have worked in a long time in NY. I think it was appreciated, since a few times Steven commented, when coming into the house, "how different" it looks! There was hardly one evening during the ten days of our stay where there was no company either for lunch or for dinner. People bring fish along or contribute one way or another to the meals. The atmosphere among the young people as well as among the middle-aged which we happened to meet, was one of genuine warmth, friendship, neighborliness, as one rarely will find it in the city. Without this important factor our children could not have "succeeded" to the point where they are now, which still leaves a lot to be wished for. But they have the cooperation of their friends which is more important than money, and in turn they will give of themselves or whatever they have to offer to others who need them. We were warmly received by everybody, while we were there we felt we fitted in. Of course 10 days and for ever is not the same. I do not believe that we could lead this kind of life. We need the stimulation of the city, of music, newspapers and even stores. New York with its problems, its ugliness but also its beauty will make it difficult for anyone, to change to a completely rural life. Fortunately the weather turned better the last few days and we could see the farm in its real beauty, the forest lush green, berries all over the bushes, they just fell in our tin-pail which we always carried with us. The last day we were able to take a sun-bath on a sun-deck in the middle of the woods, on top of the mountain which all belongs to the property. We felt like in paradise, lying there in the nude with not a soul around, and our bodies completely exposed to the warm sun-light. The following day we all five (Jonah included, of course) climbed into the van, all our baggage, all of the things for the baby including his crib, and even a cat locked up in a grate to be shipped to Seattle, ~~and~~ which had to be brought to the airport in Powell River first! From the airport we drove to the Powell River ferry and crossed to ~~the~~ beautiful Vancouver Island, a ride on a real luxurious boat of about 1½ hrs. From there we drove down the highway via Courtenay and on to Victoria, which was our goal. Neither the young ones nor we had expected such a beautiful place as Victoria turned out to be. It makes the impression of a European city, it could be in Switzerland. The flowers and banners, the snowcovered mountains and the ships in the harbor, the cleanliness and beauty of its buildings, if apartment-houses or homes, made us aware that this is really a city for retirement. One mostly meets older English

couples, but also many young people with long hair and happy expression in their faces. It is a city as we did not think would still exist in our 20th century. There is hardly industry, so no pollution, the most magnificent parks, gardens, museums, the huge totem poles, the lovely stores and small side streets with their boutiques of highly artistic items, the friendliness of the people - well, we thought, this may be our retiro some day. We spent 2 nights in a comfortable inexpensive hotel which was a treat for our young ones after their rough time they had during the last months. We ate Polynesian food, went to the movie (a special wish of Steve and Janet, who have one lousy movie in their town) and wherever we went, little Jonah was with us on his fathers or mothers back. Even at night in the movie he was not deprived of his meal! We inquired thoroughly regarding prices for living and apartments or small houses. One whole afternoon a very nice real-estate man gave a most interesting tour of the area. The following day we drove out to Butcher's Garden, the famous flower sightseeing place of the island. It was beautiful, but I guess our mind was already on saying "good-bye" to the children, so we really did not enjoy this last trip too much. Steven drove us to the ferry which leaves from Victoria to Vancouver, and that was the last time we saw each other. I do not have to mention, that it took a lot of self-control - but we all were very brave. The beautiful boat-ride to Vancouver made our hearts a bit lighter, knowing that it will not be the last time that we are here, and that we have 10 more days of new impressions ahead of us. Returning to our hotel in Vancouver was like home-coming, and the luxury of an elegant room, TV, private bath etc. let us forget our sadness! The same evening we called our unknown relatives from Henry's side, Sam Sussel and Ann Sussel, who live 2 hrs. from Vancouver on a farm, and after explaining who we are, they immediately invited us to come the following day to see them. This was "just what the doctor ordered", and leaving by bus at 8 a.m. for Chilliwack left us not much time for getting homesick for the children and the baby. When we arrived, Sam and Ann were waiting for us at the bus stop, and from the moment we met each other we felt like "long lost relatives" that's how warm they welcomed us and how much we had in common. (It is a very distant relationship, the mere fact that Mr. S. is from Kehl and Henry's mother is from Kehl, gave it already enough reason to treat us like cousins!

They really gave us the "Royal Tour" of their area, we saw a beautiful Hotel at Harrison Hot Springs, which has the ultimate in luxury and which can compete with any hotel in the U.S. or Europe in location, but is not overrun as this type of place would be in the States. We had a delicious meal at a German Restaurant right near by, took a long walk and returned later to the home of the Sussels which in my opinion is the most beautiful farm I have ever seen. They have rented out the land and the cattle to a Dutch farmer and are now just occupying the large house, a most magnificent flower- and vegetable garden, and the orchard, and since it was cherry-time, it was a thrill to climb up on the ladder and pick one's own cherries. I do not think I did this since my teens in Stuttgart. Late in the evening we took the bus back to Vancouver again with the promise that we must accompany them on a 2-3 day tour to the interior the following week. Of course we accepted! And the following week, after we had returned from a 3-day trip into the High Country, just the two of us, riding a small mountain-railroad through fjord-like scenery of such beauty that it is hard to describe, we were picked up at our hotel by Mrs. Sussel's sister who lives in Vancouver and who was kind enough to drive us to Chilliwack and also be the driver for the following 2 days to Manning Province Park. We had planned to spend another night further inland, but due to a rather disagreeable bronchitis which I contracted, with some temperature and a bad cold, we decided to return and it felt good to arrive in my bed in Vancouver for a good rest. The doctor in Chilliwack had given me a large quantity of penicillin-tablets to be taken every 4 hours. This way I was able to get around for the remaining 3-4 days, the weather turned bad, we had 51 degrees and drizzle, while NY had a heat-spell of 98! This at last made it easier for us to leave Canada. We had gathered an enormous amount of valuable information in the course of 3 weeks which may come in handy some day. One thing is certain: One can live a good life, away from the turmoil of New York, housing ~~is~~ *is cheaper* ~~well as~~ food ~~are~~ about the same, clothing is less expensive in NY. The people we met were helpful and friendly and assured us that it would not be hard to settle down and make friends. Of course this will remain to be seen. We are undecided up to now if we would prefer Victoria, a real English old world type city to Vancouver, a swinging New World city. We have to try it out, each of the two has its great beauties, snow mountains surround both cities, the ocean is right at one's doorstep, the climate in Victoria seems to be milder, but this year it seems to have been the worst summer in 30 years, so it is difficult to judge how a normal summer feels.

The fact that our little family has settled down in Powell River, about 5-6 hours ^(by Ferry) distance from Victoria or Vancouver, will of course have a certain influence on our future plans. At the same time we hope to be able to make our decision independent from the young ones. We have to expect that they may move some day again - and that we have to try to live our life (in case we make the move) because we want to face the challenge of a new life in a new surrounding, regardless whether our children remain in British-Columbia or not. This will be the most crucial decision to make once the moment has come. Let us hope we are able to approach it with an open mind, to avoid disappointments and ~~cause~~ friction later on.

I have tried to give you a glimpse of my thoughts - the more one feels at home again, the more one's doubts will rise. But may ^{be,} this ^{then} will keep us on our toes when the time for "retirement" arrives, we have something to think about!

So long to all of you.

Lise

Dear friends and relatives, I am glad to attest that the above report of Lise is as objective as a closely involved reporter possibly could be! In addition to all the beauty we saw, all the emotions we experienced we hopefully gained a deeper understanding for a form of life, totally different from our own but closer to our own, unfulfilled aspirations to return to more basic values of nature, helpfulness, friendship and away from the slavery of commercialism, luxury and waste.-

It seems to me a worthwhile task to spend the best years of our life after retiring from 50 years of making a living to find a form of living which combines these aspirations with enough amenities to suit us.-As you can see I am still a dreamer!

In friendship

Henry