

Rotary on the 'Gripsholm'

By Emily Hahn

There were 44 who met on the ship's moonlit decks for the strangest of all Rotary dinners.

OUT of almost 1,500 passengers, Rotary claims 44 of the repatriates who arrived in New York December 1 on the *Gripsholm* from many



Henry

points in the Far East.* None of us non-Rotarians realized there were so many until one lovely quiet evening, warm and moonlit, an imposing table was set outdoors on deck and we were told by the Swedish stewards that it was "a Rotary dinner." Then at least one passenger, your correspondent, realized that we were indeed free citizens on our way home to take up a normal manner of living again.

Back home, I have been going over the dinner list for that strange Rotary dinner. And it is a pleasant thought to reflect that none of the *Gripsholm* Rotarians known to me personally allowed the conditions of camp or prison to get them down. They were a cheerful and a sturdy crowd.

This goes most of all, and first of all, for Dr. James N. Henry, or, as we have always called him, "Dr. Jim," Past Governor of District 96. We embarked at the same port, Hong Kong, but I didn't know this was going to happen until I saw him at the little Chinese hotel on the water front where we were assembled on the sailing day. I hadn't seen him for more than two years, not since the days when Lingnan University, of which he is president, held some of its classes in borrowed rooms on the campus of Hong Kong University where I was teaching. Dr. Jim was busy in those days commuting between Canton and Hong Kong, trying to keep up the con-

nection between the split halves of his organization.

We first met when he introduced himself to me as a friend of my Rotarian brother, Mannel,† from the days of Rotary's Convention at Havana, Cuba (1940), and in all the time since I have never seen him when he wasn't very, very busy, but still smiling. After the Hong Kong war I wondered often about Lingnan, in Canton, and especially about Dr. Jim. There was an article in the Japanese-edited newspaper one day that said the Canton internees were living on the Lingnan campus and were happy (!) and healthy, but I didn't know how much of this to believe until I saw the Canton repatriates at the little Hong Kong Hotel September 24.

There was Dr. Jim, busy as ever and still with a smile to spare, but we did not dare speak to each other while we were on land, because he was officially still a prisoner from another city. Anyway he was rushing about seeing to baggage, helping old people, and organizing the hundred-and-one

papers that you always need in Japanese-occupied territory. Once aboard the boat and after he had discovered to his joy that his son was aboard too, having embarked in Shanghai, Dr. Jim could talk. "I admit freely," he said, "this is one time I'm glad to leave China. Still, I hope it isn't for long."

The next old friend I met was Rotarian A. R. Hager, from Shanghai, who reminded me of the past when I "borrowed" movie tickets from him. It is always useful, when you have to entertain children, to know the man who owns the movie house. Mr. Hager had not grown fatter during the years, but he did his best to make up for his deficiency as soon as we got aboard the Swedish ship. He may possibly go down in history for a very original reason: the man who gave the pants to General Morris Cohen. The General, Sun Yatsen's old bodyguard, like everyone else in Hong Kong, was hard up for clothes when he came away from Stanley Camp, and Mr. Hager came to his rescue with a gay-looking pair of blue velvet cordu-



Photos: Acme

BORN EN ROUTE, Gretchen Whitaker sends her greeting to America from her mother's arms. Later she received her "citizenship" papers at a Providence, R. I., Rotary dinner given in her honor. Her father, Charles H.

Whitaker, who was Vice-Consul at Manila, is an honorary member of the Providence Club, was once a protégé of West Coast Rotarians. . . . (Above right) The author and her daughter, Carola, leaving the boat.

* Japanese internment camps in Japan, North China, Shanghai, Canton, Hong Kong, Manila, and Saigon. For a list of Rotarians on the *Gripsholm* see page 52, *THE ROTARIAN*, February, 1944.
† Past Governor of District 147, and a member of the Rotary Club of Winnetka, Illinois.

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roy shorts. General Cohen was glad to get them—but he confided to everybody on the ship that he intended to have lace sewn around the cuffs before he sent them back.

Two Rotarian dentists, Dr. J. C. Klasson, from Manila, and Dr. J. L. Boots, from Peking, did volunteer dental work aboard the *Gripsholm*. There was plenty of it, too. People who had been living for months on insufficient rations discovered that their teeth were going bad, and though our dentists kept warning us that they couldn't do any fancy work, more than a lot of us were extremely glad they were there. They wouldn't take any money for their services, either. If you had any cash to spare, which few of us did, you could allay your pangs of conscience by putting something into the Red Cross box instead of paying the dentist.

Rotarian Claude Buss, Consul from Manila, must have been particularly glad when the *Gripsholm* docked, as every day was a headache for him. All the consular and diplomatic people were overworked, as they had to distribute the crowd and collect a mass of information about them and from them for the State Department. Unfortunately for Rotarian Buss he is easy to see in a crowd because he is tall, and his name is easy to remember because it is short, so when anyone had anything to complain about, it was, "Where's Buss? There's Buss!"

I didn't know until after I came West that the John Mokrejs I saw on the list from Shanghai was the same one who was at school with me at the University of Wisconsin. One of us must have changed a lot! But the same words don't apply to C. D. Culbertson, "Chuck," whose firm of Swan, Culbertson, and Fritz was pretty well represented. We had Culbertson and Fritz, anyway. The answer to our question "Where's Swan?" was found in New York: I met him the evening after I landed, at the Crillon. "Chuck" seems to haunt me. Not only have I known him all the nine years I was out East, but people always remind me that he came from Wisconsin too. Now I have just received a letter from the head of the State Geological Survey telling me that "one of our old boys, Culbertson, was on board

MARCH, 1944



Photo: International News

SONGS of thanksgiving come from the heart in this service conducted somewhere at sea.

the boat. Perhaps you have met him." That is something out of his past I had never realized. It takes all kinds to make a broker!

Rotarian Frank Harris was so busy helping Claude Buss and the other State boys that people thought he was one of them. That gives you a fairly good idea of the way most of us spent our time. Except for public-spirited people like Frank and the consular people who just had to do it anyway, we were not what you could call a hard-working group. Frank didn't seem to mind it and he remained his cheerful self, but as the ship came nearer to New York, and we began to shiver, he talked wistfully of his native Florida.

The only Rotarian who didn't steam into New York Harbor with

us was the charming Dr. Juan Marin from Chile, who had been caught in Shanghai, but was granted diplomatic immunity from internment. With his lovely blonde wife, the doctor was a popular passenger. He has taken degrees in psychoanalysis besides his M.D., and now he varies his diplomatic career with time off for writing novels and plays. We spent pleasant moments discussing the fine points of translation and such subjects, matters which we have all neglected during the occupation, and I was not the only sorry person when the Marins disembarked at Rio de Janeiro.

If I may venture to prophesy, Rotary Clubs will add considerably to their knowledge of the Orient in the next few months!

Glossary

This article was edited by Herbert K. Lau (劉敬恒) (Rotary China Historian) on 15 May 2015

Emily Hahn

Miss Emily Hahn was a biographer who knew China well and wrote stories from this ancient Far East country. She was a sister of Mannel Hahn, of Winnetka Rotary Club, Illinois, a Rotary past district governor in the United States, and served as editorial staff of 《The Rotarian》 magazine.

The *Gripsholm* Exchange and Repatriation Voyages during World War II



The MS *Gripsholm*, a ship that serviced the Swedish-American cruise line and was originally built in 1925, was used from 1942 to 1946 for repatriation efforts by the United States Department of State. *Gripsholm* served under the International Red Cross with a Swedish captain and crew. Making thirty-three trips to exchange women, children, diplomats, prisoners of war, and other nationals between Japan/Germany and the United States/Canada, the ship carried over 27,000 repatriates. There were just two exchanges of civilians with Japan in June 1942 and September 1943. The 44 Rotarians (13 Rotary Clubs) on board this September-December 1943 voyage were:

- (1) From Canton (廣州扶輪社), China: James McClure Henry (香雅各博士)
- (2) From Hangchow (杭州扶輪社), China: R. J. McMullen
- (3) From Hankow (漢口扶輪社), China: A. O. Adamson
- (4) From Hong Kong (香港扶輪社): R. P. Morris
- (5) From Manila, The Philippines: Claude Buss, Dr. J. C. Klasson, George J. McCarthy, Paul Steinstorf
- (6) From Mexicali, Mexico: H. T. Mooers
- (7) From Nanking (南京扶輪社), China: Dr. J. H. Daniel
- (8) From Ningpo (寧波扶輪社), China: E. M. Smith, Dr. H. Thomas
- (9) From Peking (北京扶輪社), China: Earle Ballou, Dr. J. L. Boots, A. C. Grimes, Richard Hanson, Robert Jernigan, J. V. Starrett, William Taylor

- (10) From Shanghai (上海扶輪社), China: L. M. Pharis, C. D. Culbertson, W. Stoy Elliot, L. L. Farnsworth, A. R. Hager, Frank Harris, A. B. Henningsen, Dr. Juan Martin, B. L. Meyer, John Mokrejs, J. C. Oliver, James Perkins, L. C. Perry, Bruce Smith, Max E. Vitally, Sam W. Wolfe
- (11) From Soochow (吳縣扶輪社), China: I. M. Dungan, W. B. Nance
- (12) From Tientsin (天津扶輪社), China: H. F. Barnes, T. B. Brown, J. K. Davidson, Max Lorenzen, W. E. Torrey
- (13) From Tsingtao (青島扶輪社), China: N. A. Gorman, C. C. Scratch

Dr. James M. Henry

Dr. James McClure Henry (香雅各博士), Canton Rotary Club, President/Provost of Lingnan University, who served Rotary International as Governor of the 96th District from 1938 until 1941 before he was interned by the Imperial Japanese military forces during the Pacific War. The 96th District was compiled with South China provinces, British Hong Kong, and Portuguese Macao.

Lingnan University, of Canton = (廣州)嶺南大學

Hong Kong University = 香港大學

Stanley Camp = 赤柱集中營

