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travel log  
Iris Sanderson Jones

Season's greetings, however celebrated

Before you have another piece of turkey, and oh-I-shouldn't-but-it-looks-so-good Christmas cake, I would like to show you a very brief verbal slide show of Christmas days that I remember around the world.

I never could keep my horizons straight, so you may have to lean your head sideways to get the full picture.

This first picture was taken in Fort William, Ont., which is now called Thunder Bay. It is at the top western corner of Lake Superior, which explains all that snow. My father shoveled the snow up on either side of the sidewalk like that, and I could never see over the top.

This second slide is in Powell River, British Columbia, which only three other people and I have heard of. It is on the west coast of Canada, where the mountains come down in tree slopes to the sea. That's my father playing golf in his shirt sleeves on Christmas Day. He couldn't do it every year, but he always bragged about it to his friends back in cold country when he could.

IT NEVER OCCURRED to me then that anybody actually bought Christmas trees. Powell River was pulp and paper town, so we just drove up the nearest logging road and cut our own.

Christmas in Stratford-on-Avon, England, was entirely different as you can see by all that rain and green grass in this next scene. It didn't look much like Christmas to me, and I was surprised to learn that my grandparents and all their friends had the biggest celebration of the season on Boxing Day, Dec. 26.

You can tell this slide is taken at Christmas dinner, because we've got turkey and cranberry sauce on the table, but if you look closely you'll see that we're all perspiring heavily. Christmas in Australia is in the middle of summer. Nobody in their right minds would eat that heavy Christmas dinner in the heat of summer. We did.

Christmas trees were almost impossible to find. All of the Christmas entertaining was held before Christmas, because people traditionally set out on their annual summer holidays on the day after Christmas. That turned out to be another good reason for not eating a 20-pound turkey for Christmas dinner. What would you do with the leftovers?

Now this slide may not look much like Christmas. It's an amah, house servant, in Singapore, and she is drying squid in her room. That's what I remember most about Christmas in the tropics: Taking the kids and the amah to see Santa Claus, where the amah barely restrained herself from sitting on his knee, and the smell of drying squid from the back of the apartment.

It never occurred to me when I was a child that Christmas customs were really an expression of cold northern countries. They don't make any sense at all in hot places, but people come as close as possible to celebrating Christmas in a pine tree-and-holly way. Trouble is, holly grows in the winter there as it does here; and winter is mid-June.

As I sit here staring out the window at the snow whitening the woods behind my house, I vow not to complain about the cold and wet that always seems to come with Christmas. It's a pain in the feet, but can you imagine having a summer picnic on Christmas day?

Pilgrimages not just for relics



Stonehenge offers tourists a taste of prehistoric ceremony on the Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, England.

Story and photos: IRIS SANDERSON JONES

When John Hodgson arrived in Jerusalem for the first time, he was fresh from the North African campaign and was planning to enter the priesthood.

Nowadays, when he visits the Holy Land, he goes as the father of 13 children and the president of the Catholic Travel Office in Washington, D.C.

The Catholic Travel Office will sponsor 73 pilgrimages to various destinations around the world in 1980. Pilgrimages include tours designed for Catholic and other religious denominations, with two special tours designed for the sick and handicapped.

Hodgson was a British soldier fighting in North Africa when he went on leave to Jerusalem during World War II. He was asked to help guide the few people who traveled to the Holy Land during the war.

The regular guides on the street were selling pieces of rock salt as religious relics, so he agreed. "I spent my weekends as a tour guide," Hodgson says. "People are less interested in the dates than they are in what happened at a certain location. I would read texts from the Bible to explain the historical events that occurred there."

Hodgson was at that time planning to join the priesthood. Instead, he married a nurse and raised 13 children. He came to the United States with a British military mission: later joined British Airways and then an international travel company.

The Catholic Travel Office has sold tours to 56 million Catholics from the United States. The Religious Travel Service was set up to market the same kinds of tours to other religious denominations.

PILGRIMAGES LISTED in the Catholic Travel Office brochure for 1980 start Jan. 26 with a nine-day pilgrimage to Rome and end with the Christmas in Bethlehem Pilgrimage, which celebrates midnight Mass on Christmas day 1980 in Bethlehem.

The schedule includes a round-the-world tour, as

well as pilgrimages to various parts of Europe, the Middle East, China, India, the South Pacific South America and Hawaii. It also includes special interest tours to the Oberammergau Passion Play and to carry the sick and handicapped to both Lourdes and the Holy Land.

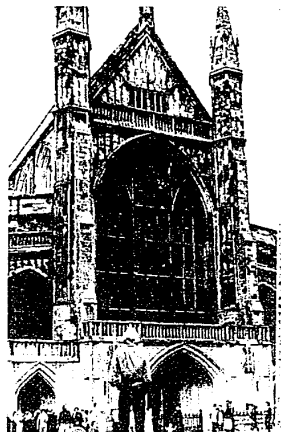
1980 WILL BE the 25th year that Hodgson has accompanied the sick and handicapped to Lourdes, and the first such handicapped tour he will take to the Holy Land.

These tours include wheelchair patients, paraplegics and a variety of other categories of severely handicapped men and women. A 10-person medical staff accompanies a group of 250 people.

"We carry people in and out of busses and up stairways whenever necessary," Hodgson says. "It will be a little more difficult in Jerusalem because the streets are old and difficult for wheel chairs. We may need to limit the number of wheelchair travelers, but we don't have any limitation on how serious the condition of the handicapped person may be."

What is a pilgrimage tour? Hodgson is eager to assure tourists that it does not mean, "That we spend the whole time on our knees."

A priest travels with each group, primarily to serve Mass daily and to serve other religious needs. "Mass is served but it is certainly not obligatory," Hodgson says.



"We go to religious sites but we also go to other tourist sites. In Egypt of course we go to the place where the holy family is believed to have lived, but we also go to the pyramids and the sphinx and other sites. They are all important."

Hodgson also wholesales his religious tours to travel agents and to churches of all denominations which may wish to take a group tour.

For further information, contact the Catholic Travel Office or the Religious Travel Service at Suite 250, 1019 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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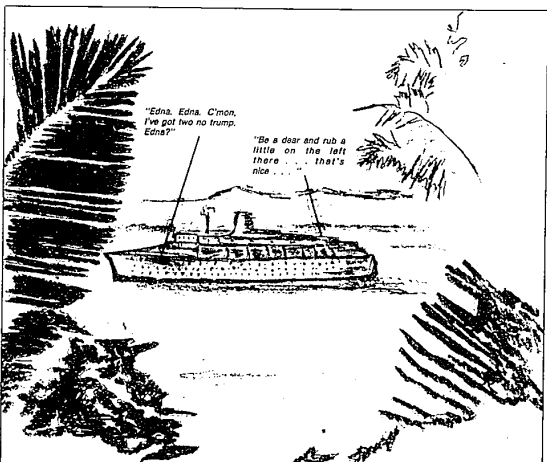
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O&E is Caribbean cruising



"Oh, there's no place like home for the holidays..." so the song goes. But the holidays and accompanying merriment last only a short time in Michigan, and what remains until spring are bellish days of grime and grays.

Providing escape from what doleful deeds winter will woefully wreak eventually, the Observer and Eccentric Newspapers has produced four travel packages to spirit its readers away to sunnier climes.

With more and more people flying the friendly skies, more and more newspapers are arranging this travel option for their readership. According to George Hagan, O&E advertising and promotion director, "this service provides people with a convenient and efficient way to plan a vacation. They can choose from several packages and basically be guaranteed a hassle-free time." Also guaranteed, he said, are the air fares.

TO BE TAKEN advantage of are four trips winging south of Florida's shores to the Caribbean. One non-stop DC-8 from Detroit will fly to San Juan, Puerto Rico. There, sojourners, depending on the package,

can either stay or catch connecting flights to St. Croix or St. Thomas, or board one of two ships to cruise a six- or seven-day land itinerary. The trip, in all cases, lasts eight days and seven nights.

Round-trip package fares range from \$589-\$1,199. Round-trip air fares only range in price from \$299-\$329. The packages include discounts for parking at Metropolitan Airport, round-trip fares and connecting flights between chosen destinations, confirmed accommodations, and round-trip airport

transfers and baggage handling. Prices are based on double occupancy.

THE TRIP DEPARTS from Metropolitan Airport Saturday, March 22, for San Juan and returns to Detroit Saturday, March 29. A \$100 deposit is required (\$150 for the island cruising) and final payments are due Jan. 22.

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