

*Leave dairy herd to take group tour*

# Bartels celebrate their 35th anniversary flying high over Alaska



Dorothy Bartels points out the vast expanse of territory Alaska covers from the lowest tip near the state of Washington in the lower right corner to the Arctic area in upper left corner of map.



Dorothy displays an Arctic circle certificate stating that husband Albert passed over the Arctic Circle, August 11, 1979 during a flight to Kotzebue, 250 miles from Russia.

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Albert and Dorothy Bartels left their six children at home last August, packed their bags and set out on a ten day celebration of their thirty-fifth wedding anniversary.

Their anniversary trip was a group trip to the United States' largest and most unsettled state, Alaska. Looking back some eight months since the trip, Dorothy says she and her husband were very surprised at what they saw and what they learned.

The Chester County couple had spent their years together as dairy farmers. They were unaccustomed to traveling great distances or even thinking about traveling far from home. But they agreed and made plans to take part in the agriculture-sponsored tour to Alaska last Summer anyway. Their six children were by then old enough to handle things at home.

The Bartels have a milking herd of 110 Holsteins with an additional 75 heifers on their farm in Penn Township near West Grove. Two of their four sons, Richard and Edward, are employed fulltime on the family farm and they and the youngest son, David who still lives at home took over the chores. These three took care of home while Dorothy and Albert set off on their adventure.

The excitement and interest in learning about other areas of the World became a lasting souvenir of their trip, Dorothy explained. She kept a detailed scrapbook of the trip including photos, postcards, plane tickets, cruise ship newsletters, certificates stating passing over the arctic circle all combined in chronological order according to the daily itinerary of the ten-day excursion. Actually the trip exceeded the ten days for the Bartels. They had to add a few extra days away because they had to fly to Seattle, Washington first and then from there back to Pennsylvania after the scheduled ten-day Alaskan tour.

All the tour group met at Seattle, August 3, 1979, and did some sight-seeing there for the day. From there they rode a bus to Vancouver. On the way into Canada, Dorothy said the customs officials were not particularly thorough in their procedures. The tour guide took care of the customs arrangements. However, later in the tour they were subject to a thorough personal search at Kotzebue which is only 250 miles away from Russia.

To give an idea of the immensity of the territory she and her husband and the rest of the group covered, Dorothy pointed out that Alaska is twice as large as the state of Texas or about one-fifth the size of the contiguous United States. The area is so vast and transportation is so limited that one in sixteen have pilots licenses and one in forty-four of the Alaskan population has his own plane. The tour group flew several times from point to point in Alaska as well as ride a bus and took a 1000 mile cruise up the inland waterway.

Methods of transportation were as varied as the climate, terrain and degree of settlement throughout the vast state.

Dorothy said there was so much to see and experience that all their days and nights were filled with new information.

The first leg of the journey involved a boat cruise of 1000 miles up the inland waterway from Vancouver, through Ketchikan, with a one day stop then on to Juneau, the capital of the state. While at Ketchikan, Dorothy and the rest of the group got to see the native Alaskan Indians and their customs. The typical totem poles abounded in the area. A feature of the Indian lifestyle which amused Dorothy was the custom of leaving the poles and roofs of the winter homes behind and taking the sides along to the summer homes fishing waters. Mother Nature took care of the house cleaning of the winter home until the family returned the next season.

After seeing the Indians of Ketchikan for a day, the cruise went on to Juneau. There they transferred to a day

boat for the ride up to Skagway. The scenery was unbelievable with its Glacier Bay water set against steep glacier of cliffs, sometimes as high as 9000 feet. While feeling totally safe on the cruise boat and the day boat as they made their way through the steep-sided waterways, Dorothy said she was less confident about the bus trip over steep gravel roads from Skagway to Whitehorse, in the Yukon Territory.

The customs getting into the Yukon Territory were also more strict than at Vancouver. Noted for its history of gold mining, the sights of the area included the Golden Nugget and other buildings all built on pilings because the permafrost in the ground will not make stable foundation sites.

Whitehorse was typically settled with log cabins with sod roofs which helped insulate from the cold. At the time this trip was at Whitehorse, it was summer time and gardens abounded with sweet peas, carnations and bachelor buttons with such intensity of color that Dorothy said it is impossible to imagine; one has to be there to see all the color.

The group left Whitehorse at midnight by plane to fly to Fairbanks, Alaska, to tour the University of Alaska grounds. Although it was midnight, there were only five minutes of darkness before the sun's rays emerged again. Fairbanks is situated in a hollow of a deep bowl-shaped terrain, Dorothy explained. Surrounded by mountains on all sides, it is very cold and very dry. While most of the trip brought unexpected warm weather, the stop over in Fairbanks reminded the group of the cold in the northern parts of the state. Instead of seeing parking meters along the streets, Dorothy said there were battery stations where drivers would plug in their car batteries to allow them to start in the extreme cold.

While at Fairbanks, the group also saw a "frozen fog" or as Dorothy explained it, the atmospheric condition when the fog appears to be frozen in suspension. During the stay at Fairbanks, the group also saw the enormous pipeline and the University of Alaska's farm and museum. From Fairbanks they flew to Anchorage.

While at Anchorage, the group visited the Palmer University Farms and saw the huge-sized produce growing there. The heads of cabbage averaged a weight of 86 pounds apiece, Dorothy recalled. Besides the modern farming taking place at Anchorage, the Indian population was living out its existence in the midst of government subsidy and ancient customs. Fishing and hunting for



The Black candle in front of Dorothy is a crude oil candle and the white candle is made from seal oil. The Bartels kept a detailed scrapbook of their trip.

At Kotzebue Dorothy said she could see the tundra and its vegetation. Although blueberry bushes were only eight inches high, they still produced regular-sized fruit.

A typical situation travelers often find when searching for authentic souvenirs was that found at Kotzebue as well. Dorothy explained that the area has jade type deposits, but the Eskimos usually sell the jade to visitors after it has been fashioned into ornaments in Japan. At present, training is taking place so that the natives can fashion their own merchandise.

From Kotzebue the group started back home with a flight to Anchorage on an inlet in the Gulf of Alaska, then back to Seattle. Along with memories of spectacular sites Dorothy brought back candles made from both crude oil and seal oil. The crude oil candle was black while the seal oil candle was a creamy white color. She also bought a miniature wooden totem pole.

The state was opened to extensive tourism commerce in 1972, Dorothy explained and she "would highly recommend it." She packed clothes for cold weather and found them practically useless most of the time because the areas they were in were warmed by the ocean air. She mentioned that the Grange which served the group a supper had told them that the projected legislation to make much of Alaska a wilderness area would greatly hinder the tourism and their established farming enterprises.

## Homestead Notes

furs, living in sod houses built on poles for support and using dog sleds and snowmobiles, were typical of the Indian lifestyle.

The northernmost part of the journey was to Kotzebue. The flight from Anchorage to Kotzebue brought the travellers within 250 miles of Russia. Just before reaching Kotzebue, the plane flew over the arctic Circle and all passengers were given certificates stating that passage.