

Home Thoughts From North Africa

By MRS. PAT WILSON

11/11/61
We took the boys up to Score Mountain to the radar site on Sunday. That is one of the most isolated spots in the world. A narrow road winds up the mountain (with gravel areas extending out over nothing for a car should you happen to meet head on). It is at least a mile up. There is the tower and one other building that houses the six airmen stationed there. An accordion type barb wire fence surrounds the place. You can see for miles and miles. Mohammed villages visible in the distance with the land criss-crossed by donkey paths. One of the airmen took us out on the rocky ledges. These boys of ours are like mountain goats and just as careful.

I fried chicken, took along a couple cans of potato sticks, Chocolate cake and Coke. We ate with the airmen. They have a well equipped kitchen, but I guess they get pretty tired of each other's cooking. They ran a movie, "The Wizard of Bagdad" for the boys. I drove the car down the mountain—Bill and the boys hiked — David and Billy making it half way and Patrick and Bill all the way down. We took pictures of the event.

2/4/62
We drove to Marrakech Saturday. I wish we lived down there. I'm completely fascinated by that place. With all of its smells (in some places) beggars, etc. The French market on the main drag is the nicest vegetable market I have ever seen. They have beautiful fresh flowers, too — I bought a bouquet of miniature roses for the Chapel altar for today for 40c and a dozen Baby Iris for 40c for the house. I also bought 4 lbs of fresh peas for 200 francs (40c) and they were delicious. Also, 2 lbs of tomatoes for 15c and a dozen oranges as big as grapefruit for 20c.

2/11/62
We did not eat at the Club today. I bought a beef roast and we ate at home. We get pretty tired of looking at the same old cuts of meat in the Commissary. Do you know what you can have for us to eat when we get home? A nice BIG platter of lots of kinds of cold cuts and a large can of cottage cheese from Dallas Dairy! The only sliced meat we can buy is balogna and pimento loaf—both green around the edges! Cottage cheese is made from re-constituted powdered milk and you can imagine how it tastes! — Actually we should be ashamed to complain about the food here. All we have to do is look at these Moroccans to realize that we have far too much to eat.

We made our last trip to Fedala and had a wonderful time. There were a lot of campers, but at no time were there more than a dozen people on the beach at a time. There were a lot of Swiss, Austrians and Germans this time. We took a minimum of food and equipment with us this time. We slept on two cots and the boys slept in the car. By Thursday we were all sunburned, but not as bad as the last time we were down. We shall never forget Fedala! The boys went on the coral

every morning and caught crabs and small fish in jars. We walked on the beach at night — serenaded by three Moroccan teen-agers with a guitar. They played and sang Spanish and Moroccan tunes and even tried to do the twist in the sand! We went through all the words we knew in several languages — German, Spanish, French, Arabic and Japanese. Mostly words of greeting, thank you, how are you, etc. Its surprising how many words you pick up. I think we have learned more Arabic than any other.

On Saturday, at noon, Brecka (our fatima) met us at the French Market on the main street of Marrakech. She took us to her home in the medina. She has a court yard around which lives her family — married son, parents, etc. We sat on cushions around a low table. The cous-cous, a kind of cooked grain heaped in a large dish. In the center of the bowl were carrots, turnips and bits of meat. No one uses plates. Brecka gave us spoons and we all dipped into the same bowl. Then we were served beef, done fork-tender, with potatoes in the natural gravy. The gravy is sopped up with huge chunks of bread. Bread and fingers were our only utensils — all eating again from the same bowl. This may seem unsanitary, but really did not bother us as only the food directly in front of the person is touched. — Then, we were served mint tea and coffee. The head of the household made the tea. This is a regular ceremony. Brecka sat on a small brightly colored rug — a brass tea tray on short legs in front of her. A large bunch of mint was pushed into the tea-pot, a lovely, graceful, engraved pot. A special mint tea is used, hot water added and then large chunks of sugar. Moslems love sweet, sweet tea.

We took lots of pictures, black and white as we couldn't get colored film. Brecka has some beautiful children. Her little girl, 5 yrs. old, has long, black hair, braided and huge dark brown eyes, with long, long lashes. "Zorra" was dressed in a long, full, pink dress and underneath, sheer pale green pantaloons. The little boy, age 3½ yrs., was full of the dickens. He kept running in and out of the room, upset a glass of tea, made faces. Finally, Brecka sent for a belt. This the most extreme punishment—they simply do not believe in spanking children and surprisingly most Moroccan children are well-behaved. — Anyway, this did not faze little "Hamed"! When his Daddy made to slap his legs with the belt, he promptly kicked his father in the shins!

I gave the children a box of chewing gum. The two little ones and the older girls (Fatma & Fatima) chewed constantly. One of the girls kept up a constant cracking of gum that put my efforts to shame when I was "young"! Brecka's son has a small boy about a year old. The Grandfather, who is very old, also came in for tea. How he loved the baby. The old fellow wore a "tarboush"

rag wrapped like a turban about his head and a "jelaba". When we took pictures of the family, he went to a shed and brought out his dog. The dog was sleek and fat, another unusual thing, as most Moroccan dogs look starved and mangy. "Grandfather" smoked one of Bill's cigarettes, but the son refused (Mohammed's are forbidden tobacco).

I could go on and on about that meal and the walk we took into the medina later with Brecka as our guide. She would not let us buy a thing as she said the prices were too high due to a religious holiday coming up. On this holiday they visit the graves. Also, it is the day that all women pray that they may go to heaven. Moslem women have no "rights" in this life and cannot be assured of "life after death". Brecka bought each of the boys a vase-like object with skin stretched over one end. This is tapped with the fingers. I've put them away as I think they are excellent souvenirs, but they are like egg shells — easily broken.

6/26/62
The boys are very restless the last week or so. They know we will soon be leaving. A lot of families left this month. The large trucks with huge packing crates were in and out of the housing area. Bill and I talk about getting this and that done and how some of the things we are doing for the last time in Morocco. I suppose it is disturbing to small children. They talk about what fun it will be at Grandpa's but you know they have been so happy here, it probably upsets them a little to be leaving. Also, they are looking forward to Biloxi, especially the beach. Can you imagine how strange the States will seem to them — especially, Billy? For two years they have seen only sheep grazing, camels, donkeys, dirty, ill-clothed Mohammeds, mud villages, date palms and a few Orange trees. When we went to Fedala, we saw a few trees in small areas. Of course the High Atlas is covered with pine, etc. As I've written many times, Ben Guerir sits in the middle of nothing. I would be excited too at the thought of T.V., super-markets and department stores; if I was sure I could some day return to Morocco. The "Commies" are ready to grab it as soon as we move out — have in fact, already started and it is the thought that these (for the most part) friendly people may turn against us that hurts. These people are so very poor — the things we throw out are valuable to them. I threw an old inflated toy in the

Attractive Building

One of the most attractive buildings on Main Street, Dallas is the remodelled office building and apartments of Mr. and Mrs. John Williams. The building formerly housed Dallas 5c, 10c and \$1 store. It is now occupied by Bruce Slocum's Insurance Agency.

We have arranged for other jobs for both Omar and Brecka when we leave here.

7/3/62
We are sweltering! It was 107 degrees today and at 7:00 o'clock tonight had only cooled off to 98 degrees. Most unusual. There is no cool breeze blowing yet. Thunder heads hung over the Atlas late this afternoon, but we expect no rain. We are told there have been thunder showers all along the other side of the Atlas reaching all the way into Algeria. Wish one would blow over here — Ben Guerir could sure use a few drops of moisture. I feel sad because our lawn will get no water and all our work to keep it green will be as nothing a few days after we leave. My Four O'clocks

are waist high out back!
Brecka is on her prayer rug in the bedroom going through her 5-times-a-day ritual. She fills an empty 3 pound coffee can with water and goes into the back yard. Washes her face, cleaning her eyes, ears, nose and rinses her mouth—then her hands and arms (up to her elbows), then her feet and ankles. Good Old Mohammed was pretty foxy, eh, what? At least he knew he'd get water on these people five times a day — that is, if they are faithful and want to pray.

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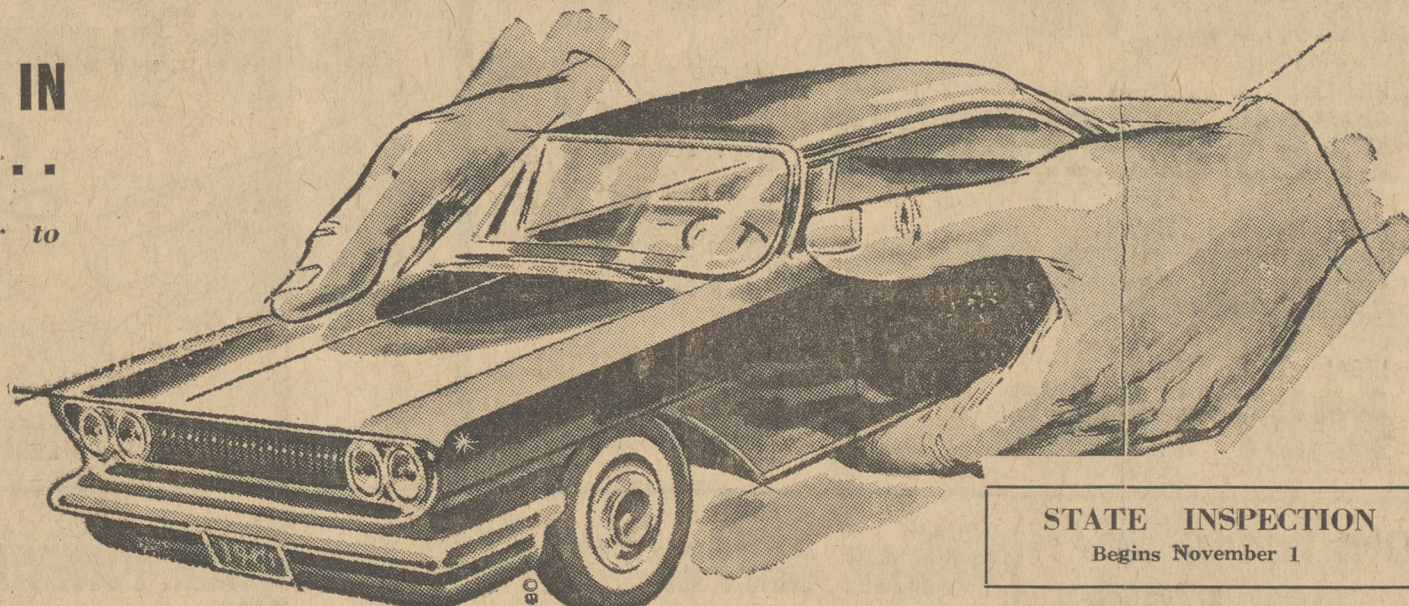
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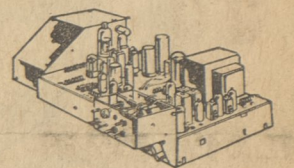
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