

Define Vacation *By Harry Zirchelbach*

Defining vacation can be challenging. In High School and College years there had always been year long employment. Vacation was a day long trip, or home for the holiday.

On graduation from the University of Detroit, immediate entry in the U.S. Navy where, by some estimates, life was a continual vacation. Imagine, every day on Orders to do something enjoyable, to travel the margins of a Western world when until then never further than 300 miles from home. All expenses paid, plus monthly dollars. That ended. Then steps that chose Denver, employment, marriage.

The idea of vacation narrows to moments with family, here, at times in eastern states. All enjoyable. The years are eaten by this routine.

Social Security in 1984. Barbara and I plan our first vacation, for two. To Japan. That began in April, thru northwest Colorado, on to Salt Lake City to first visit to my first cousin. His father, Mom's brother, ran away from their Pittsburgh home as a lad, never returned, from the gold mines and bars of Park City Utah. We collect all that history, add to the memory bank, for we never meet again.

Now the easy trip, drive to Travis AFB 50 miles northeast of San Francisco. Fate intervenes. Not only do I run out of gas on the ribbon I-80 thru the Great Salt Lake, but later that day the motor of the Plymouth freezes, near Elko, Nevada.

Meet the Plymouth dealer there at dawn Monday, tell him to make the necessary repair, obtain his help in boarding the early bus to San Francisco, and arrive at Travis AFB the next morning. We visit San Francisco sights, friends who had moved there years ago, enjoy true leisure.

On return to Travis we catch a flight to Hickam AFB in Honolulu. President Reagan visits on the way to a diplomatic visit to China. Here begins a real vacation, sights to visit are those every tourist sees, then those none see, then those from moments in 1945/46. Military Space Available to Guam, Yokota (Tokyo). Do the sight-seeing. Tokyo had been rubble everywhere in 1946, unrecognizable this time. High rises, prosperity everywhere.

Shinkansen (bullet) train to Osaka, day there, train to Kyoto, home base 1946. Temples only unchanged landmarks. Kyoto Hotel where we lived, now enormous, same name. Searching remote corner find the old lobby intact, just as it was when we checked in, left messages then.

Kyoto is relatively small, easily navigated by street car. We do all the tourist things. Learn the Catholic Cathedral has been razed, replaced by a small French design Church.

Train further west to Sea of Japan, then north to Nanao. A small town of farmer/fishermen then, now a successful center for the vacationing Japanese. Lush hotels, all sizes, everywhere. We have reservation in one. Make the rounds from there.

The trek complete, we train direct south to Denver's twin city of Takayama, are treated to tea, get to keep the cups, then to Nagoya, Tokyo, Yokota, direct flight to Travis AFB. Have we been gone only four weeks?

Bus to Elko, recover the Plymouth, and talk of the journey every mile of the road home. New adventure to Barbara every hour, a renewal many times for me.

That's when we initially defined vacation, live to refresh it many times.