Remember I Didn't Want You To Go—Famous Last Words

By Larue B. Stone

"Remember, I didn't want you to go"—famous last words of their mother, are being recalled by these days by Mrs. Leigh Hammond and her sister, Beatrice Holt. Miss Holt returned this past week from the Far East where she has been with the State Department as Director of Library Services.

She was met in New York by Mrs. Hammond and will visit in the Hammond home, 123 North 17th Street, until June 1.

"Bea has spent most of her life traveling from one country to the other, and mother always tried to persuade sister to stay home, with no success," Mrs. Hammond said. "When time came to put Beatrice on the train it was the same—each time—with noses pressed against the window pane, mother would admonish, 'Remember, I didn't want you to go."

"But Bea has been everywhere there is to go except Russia, and now as she takes off on one of her travels, I find myself echoing mother's words," admits Mrs. Hammond.

Possessing a vivacious personality and a fine mind, Miss Holt has a wide knowledge of the Orient, gained from her world experience. Her views of the world situation are very definite, although her outspoken opinions were somewhat thwarted by her sister, in a fashion smacking of their childhood days, no doubt.

The librarian has been on a two-year leave of absence from the University of Denver where she was Associate Professor in the School of Librarianship.

Her first assignment with the State Department was in Korea just prior to the invasion of Southern Korea. At this time she was engaged inspecting libraries in the farthest outposts of Korea. She escaped the onslaught only by a few hours, and lost most of her personal possessions doing it, when she was lucky enough to be wedged on a Norwegian Freighter which had been unloading fertilizer at Seoul.

There were accommodations for only 12 people on the boat, and almost 700 people, including 48 infants and 500 children managed to cram aboard. During the trip to the British back their ammunition.

According to Miss Holt, the British have the Malayan conflict all to themselves, there being no American Army personnel there. It is costing the British a fortune to carry on the battle in Malaya—much more than anyone is aware of.

Miss Holt is of the opinion that the conflict in the East is a part of World Revolution, a change being brought on by two factors—transportation and communication. "Today it is one world" she says. "The white man is looked up with suspicion today in Asia. They have been under Crown Colonies rule for so long and exploited, that now they wonder why we are really over there and what we want."

One of her personal Asian friends startled Beatrice recently when, in her own home, he made the statement, "You know, I am suspicious of every white face."

"He didn't say, except yours," recalls Miss Holt. "As a matter of fact I shudder now when I think that in the event of an emergency I would have gone to this Asian for help and would have probably gotten my throat slit."

She believes that the Asians do not want us as colonists—but as a friendly ally, they will welcome us. There is much good will to work and an enormous amount of teaching to be done. The two best ways to do this job is through public schools and libraries. There are no free libraries nor free schools there, and according to Miss Holt, these are two of the greatest institutions in a Democracy.

Many of the natives who cannot read nor write, can speak two or three languages, and can understand Communist propaganda in whatever language it is served to them. On the other hand, being unable to read, they are incapable of forming opinions for themselves. The people are anxious to learn and eager for knowledge, and if we Americans just had enough people in the East to answer their many questions, it would be a big help, asserts Miss Holt.

The United States Information Service in India has set aside a special fund for the purchase of free libraries. Miss Holt is trying to get a library started in the city of Kuching, Borneo, and has asked people to contribute money for the purpose.

The tea service which Miss Holt is holding is a vermeil cloisonne, purchased in Hong Kong. In the foreground is a fabulous jade Chinese duck. To the left of the brass Chinese incense burner. The interesting "Table" also bought in Hong Kong. It is made of blue-inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Opium tables are very popular but place the tables on their beds (as soft mattresses such as ours) and recline as they please.

Photo
Mrs. Leigh Hammond, at left, admires the Chinese wedding dress brought from the Orient by her sister, Miss Beatrice Holt. The intricate embroidery on the skirt is “Peking” needle work, now outlawed in China because so many were blinded by doing this type embroidery. Miss Holt at right is wearing the top of the dress. In the background is a carved Chinese chest which Miss Holt purchased in Malaya. On the chest are two hand-carved wooden figurines. The one on the left is the God of Longevity and on the right, the Goddess of Mercy. The two small bowls on the chest are gold in color and are Korean brass. The formula for the brass is lost, but it is believed that there is a quite a bit of gold content in the metal, as they chime like crystal when flicked by a finger. (Staff Photo)
Miss Holt recalls now, with a laugh, that she was one of the best mothers' helpers on the freighter, and spent one whole night preparing baby bottles.

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It was practically a matter of "Out of the frying pan into the fire" for Beatrice. After her escape to Japan, she was on temporary assignment to Hong Kong for four months. Then she was sent to the really hot spot of the earth in her estimation—Kuala Lumpur, the capital of the Federated States of Malaya, where she maintained headquarters for 16 months.

Occasionally she had duties which took her to such places as Saigon, Indo China and Djakarta, Indonesia; and for her money, Malaya is another volcano in the war against Communism.

Members of the American Consulate staff at Kuala Lumpur, were under strict curfew, being unable to travel by car or train. Communist bandits even bomb the picture shows and other places of public gathering.

"I have laid awake many nights watching bombers do their destructive work," recalls Miss Holt.

Upon questioning the term "bandits", she patiently explained that: "In 1942, many Chinese underground forces took to the jungle to fight the Japanese. The British aided the Chinese by dropping guns and ammunition to them—much of it was buried. After World War II, many of these same Chinese turned Communist, and are now busily engaged giving libraries, of which there are approximately 32 in Far East excluding Japan, the natives can borrow books, magazines, movie films, and picture projectors, records and record players. There are thousands of films shown over and over. American music on records and machines are available. All books are by American authors and are just now being translated into the various languages.

The films are in both English and the language of the country. Many are on educational themes such as the making of rubber and steel, and then there are travelogues which are very popular.

There is one serious problem in regard to movies. The public show houses make much of such films as "Pinky" and others of questionable taste. Miss Holt believes that Hollywood should screen films of that nature and not sell much stuff to plebeian who are subject to communistic propaganda.

In the U.S. Information Library in Kuala Lumpur 42 American books have been translated into Chinese, ranging in type from volumes of poems to "Huckleberry Finn" and "The Wind." When asked what they really liked best, she quickly replied, "Oh, 'The Wind' is still a best seller!"

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Miss Holt remembers, with a chuckle, the wryness of a situation at Christmas time when three Chinese boys in Kuala Lumpur—practically sitting on the equator—painted a mural for the library window. The theme was a snow scene. Having never seen snow, the young artists drew from their imagination, what they had read in a child's book. "And a good mural it was too!" brags Beatrice.

Miss Holt is most sincere in her belief that the natives are enthusiastic and sincere in their desire to obtain knowledge. And what is more, they are smart. Then she told of a Chinese lad who was reading in English about a papoose, a wigwam and a pueblo. When she asked, "What is a pueblo?" He quickly replied, "An Indian's house." Another boy to whom she offered a child's "Golden Encyclopedia" refused it saying, "It's too easy" and calmly continued reading a "National Geographic Magazine."

The most interesting experience she has ever had, was in September when she spent the month on the Island of Bali. However, she has a word of advice for any males who think they would like to make a trip to the Island to see the beautiful Bali women—"Save your money, friend, they are the most filthy and dirty women in the world!"

"Not only that but the Indonesian Government has now made the women put their clothes on—no more half-nude females run around the island. The law for a tooth camera. So unlike the lush green Island itself, you disappointment!"

One of the most interesting experiences Miss Holt has is chewing of beetle with a green lime. The juice and colors every tooth to their chimp saliva.

While in Bali, tended a number of monkeys, the mosquito which was the "Rite". Even while the ceremony, a goat rise on she flatly advised subject to jitters chair, should stay "Tooth Filing," forms the rites, day.

The natives who the act dress in carry gifts of fruit to the altar. The on their backs, and the priest edges with a like filling the gap. Miss Holt never
Malaya.

“Dal” runs through the town. Practically everyone lives in houseboats. While snowbound, Beatrice went cruising down the lake of Dal in a “Shikara” and visited the Palace of Shalamar. The Palace of Shalamar is really a group of gardens profuse with flowers and fountains, built by Mogul Kings for their loves.

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From Kashmir she flew back to New Delhi and on to Karachi, the capital of Pakistan, which was choked with refugees. “Refugees from somewhere are everywhere!” are Miss Holt’s summing up words. After leaving Karachi, she flew across the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf, over Abadan the huge British oil refinery now closed, and on to Basra in Iraq. From there on to Beirut in Lebanon and then to Egypt.

Cairo was her stopping place in Egypt and there she took a train to the “Valley of Kings,” where the tombs of the ancient kings of Egypt are located. She climbed down into King Tut’s tomb when the thermometer registered 117 degrees.

From Cairo she flew to Istanbul and on to Athens, Greece. Here she arrived just as half of the Sixth Fleet of the Navy appeared for a routine training. She and the boys in blue climbed the acropolis to the Parthenon (a celebrated Doric temple) together.

After flying across the Adriatic Sea and the heel of the boot of Italy, Beatrice landed in Rome to find spring in all its glory. Here, too, everything was “positively the most gorgeous of anywhere yet.”

She arrived in Rome the week after Easter, and the city was full of tourists lingering after the holidays. The wisteria and other flowers were at their “height of glory.”

Paris was her next stop, and she visited with friends for several days and was entranced with the beauty of the chestnut trees in bloom and the tulips in the Luxembourg Gardens.

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Twenty-eight hours and two planes after leaving Paris, Miss Holt arrived in New York. Plane trouble and bad weather plagued the trip the entire time, but it was all fun, exciting and beautiful to the traveler, who finds these adjectives apply to every place and every thing which touches her life.

Miss Holt will leave June 1 for Denver, Colorado, where she will make her decision as to whether she will again teach in the University of Denver, or accept a new assignment which has been offered to her in the Far East.

Odds have it that before many more weeks pass, Beatrice will be off again to find more places of beauty and interest, as she ended her interview with, “If you have ever lived in the Far East, there is something about those people that call you back.”