

Fenwick Island, DE, August 21, 1989

Dear All,

I'll summarize the first two weeks of our vacation. The Schumman Whale cottage off of Dagsboro St. is the same we rented last year. It has four bedrooms and a bath upstairs, and one more bedroom downstairs, plus half bath, living room, kitchen, and screened porch. The back yard is on a canal, that connects to the bay. Two changes from last year is that we have a window airconditioner (nice on hot days) and a telephone (302/539-3931) installed for these three weeks.

Alan and Alma were the first to arrive, with Susan. They actually got here before we did, and waited on the front steps for our arrival; but our neighbors have a key to the cottage and let them in. Unfortunately the powers in Louisville scheduled a week-long conference right in the middle of our vacation, so they had to take time off for that. At first it looked like no one had brought Rook cards (Alma's favorite game), but we finally found that two sets were available. Alan and Alma brought their new Toshiba 1200 laptop computer, rated first by Consumer Reports. Alma spent some time going through one of the tutorials, and they are both going to take computer courses this fall, and become "computer literate."

Father and Doris are the only ones staying the whole three weeks. Father has the downstairs bedroom, and enjoys chess, scrabble, checkers, go-ban, and walks. Doris has done a number of pen sketches of the trees and cottages around here. The bird population is different from home, and Doris is our expert (now that she has her bird book); we've enjoyed seeing a green heron, and a great blue heron, as well as the common ducks and seagulls.

Alan and Faby arrived in the United States on the 15th and came here for a few days. Faby met a few Gordons she knew, and a number she didn't; her English is improving, but still doesn't come easily. Faby's mother passed away a month ago, after a number of hospital stays; that, plus the packing up to come to the States, means they were tired, and enjoyed a few days of relaxation. We were sorry they couldn't stay around to be here with the rest of the Gary Gordons, but they had to leave to get to the seminary in Mississippi.

Sylvia and Woody came for the first week, and achieved another "first" -- they came in their own plane. It's not a hydroplane, so they couldn't taxi up to the back yard, but landed at the Ocean City airport. Tuesday I needed to get home, to go to the Speakeasy conference in Chicago; Susan also wanted to go to Washington to do some business. So Woody flew us to Montgomery County Airpark, and he and Sylvia did some sightseeing in Washington. The 1-hr flight certainly beats driving, and I had the special privilege (another "first") of driving George to the Ocean City airport, fly to Montgomery County, and then drive Amy home. Carol had very thoughtfully offered to drive Amy to the airport and then bike home.

This vacation we also have a keyboard instrument, a Casio Pulse Code Modulation instrument, with a "465 sound tone bank" feature. It belongs to Sylvia and Woody, who have loaned it to Alan and Alma for the year. It can be used, to a limited extent, as a piano, organ, rhythm instrument, or drum set. Doris misses the full keyboard and the sustaining pedal of the piano. But we have enjoyed it, and it enhances our singing, alternating with the guitars.

Initially Susan was going to spend three weeks here at the beach, and Sandra decided she was going to stay in Washington Grove and enjoy some peace and quiet. But they also wanted to be together, to make plans for their coming year -- in Japan. So Sandra came here for a few days, and Susan is spending some time in Washington Grove.

Joy and Sonia Daugherty joined us for one weekend. I returned from Chicago Thursday evening, so Friday I met them downtown, and Sonia drove us out to the beach. We stopped at our favorite fruit stand on Rt. 113, about half an hour before the beach, and loaded up with fruit and fresh corn. Sonia D. has been at many Gordon get-togethers, so she is familiar with our activities.

One other participant was Marcello, who also came to enjoy a few days here. Shortly after his arrival he decided to "go for a walk on the beach." He was familiar enough with the area to know that the boardwalk was south of here, but not familiar enough to know that it was ten miles. So he walked down there and back, and had a little trouble finding the cottage since he hadn't bothered with taking bearings before he left. He returned tired and wiser, and with no ill effects such as Sandra had, when she and Donald hiked to Ocean City.

As for me, it's taken a while for me to settle down to a vacation. The first week was largely taken up with the Chicago trip. Then my income taxes were due August 15, since I had filed for a 4-month extension from April 15. I had not planned to leave them this long, but a rush job at Intelsat, Carol's graduation, a trip to Brazil, Marcia's wedding, more work at Intelsat, and Mother's passing away -- all made it difficult to set aside three days for taxes.

Anyway, I haven't worked quite as hard as I did during last year's "vacation", when I was compiling the index for the Communications Satellite Handbook. An index is a lot of work. I just noticed an error in the index for the "Hymns for the Family of God." "There's within my heart a melody" is listed as 633, when it should be 587. The error is also in the Topical Index, under "Fellowship with God."

It has rained almost every day this vacation, but we still have enjoyed the beaches and the canoeing. On the 19th the bay rose a bit, so it was the same level as our driveway, and we had to find islands to get to our cars. Father and I canoed on the three streets around here; it was fun canoeing the same street that cars were using. There's a new restaurant close by, Eating Out Inn, that serves a good buffet meal.

This past weekend only Father, Doris, and I were here. But in Washington Grove there was a houseful, with: Davi, Donald, Alan, Faby, Norman, Carol, Sandra, Joy, Susan, Tim, Marcia, Stan, and Marcello. That was a switch. Marcia, Carol, and Susan were interested in the wedding of Marcia's roommate - Laurie Seiler. This last week at the beach we will have Donald, Norman, Carol, Marcello, Alan and Alma, and -- possible visits from Ray, Lisa, and a friend of Donald's.

Love to all,

*Gary*

Fenwick Island, DE, August 25. 1989

Dear Extended Family,

I arrived at Washington Grove's Grand Central Station last Thursday and my first indication of the out-of-control turnover rate of guests at this hotel was a comment from guest hostess Sandra: "I called your dad at the beach last night and asked him about person X's arrival time and his only response was 'I give up'." If "U. Gary" couldn't keep up with everyone's changing schedule, certainly no one could.

This foreboding was proved accurate before my eyes as one after another cousins began changing their minds about going to the beach for the final week. Some of these decisions were made conspicuously right after I showed up in town. Was there some correlation here?, I thought to myself. I chose to believe the contrary as they informed me that they would only have been able to go for a couple of days in the first place. So on Monday morning, Donald, Carol, Marcelo and I, the few fearless, loyal vacationers who dared to turn our backs to the seeds of dissension so perilously planted by our betraying cousins choked by the vices of employment and academic obligations -- that's right, the four of us perseverers against such worldly temptations ventured forth by hopping into a car and driving out to Fenwick Island in faith that the Schumann Whale cottage would not disappoint us.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, disappoint us it did not. Thanks to the company of Gary, Doris, Alan and Alma and (grand)Father and the accomodations so graciously provided, it has been like a 'spring of living water' in the midst of this passing year.

The attractions are numerous, some old, some new. The canoeing contingent has been in full force with atleast one hardy trip every day. Volleyball has kept the less sedentary ones busy in the late afternoons after the '5-minute burn' sunrays have dissipated. Planning and cooking meals is still a favorite beach pastime for those of us who know how to prepare one or two -- well, maybe just one -- dish: I did my fried rice (hot only in temperature mind you), Donald made a mean chili (like fire in the mouth), Carol made a chicken salad (fresh and cold all the way), and Marcelo promises rice and beans made by a native tonight.

Less expected but just as delightful were the casio keyboard mentioned in the last letter, numerous sightings of various kinds of heron nearby (large bird with a beak almost as long as its flamingo neck), and the night life on The Boardwalk at Ocean City. On occasion, we've renegeed on our Scottish heritage and actually paid money on the spot for entertainment: Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom Tuesday night/\$2.00 per person, Putt-putt golf Wednesday night/\$3.00 par person but a treat by (grand)Father. Lest such extravagant spending turn us all into

gluttonous materialists, we did have a cost-free devotional on Thursday before Alan and Alma left; we discussed change in our lives, emphasizing the new life that arises with the passing away of the old.

So as you can see, those who lost their cosmopolitan life for the sake of family vacationing were rewarded a hundred times over. As for those who were not able to make it down for one reason or another, we can assure you that your absence was noticed, meaning, of course, that your presence was missed, and we hope this won't be the case next year.

Love to you all from all your ocean-/bay-side kinfolk,

Norman

P.S. For those that haven't kept score, let me summarize: the Silvas (Davi) and Doles (Tim, Marcia, Stan) got to Washington Grove, but not to the beach. There were five Alan Gordons (Sylvia, Woody, Sandra, Joy, Susan) and five Gary Gordons (Donald, Alan, Faby, Norman, Carol) that made it to the beach, with their parents.

Thursday evening after supper on the back porch (prepared by Carol) we had a lovely walk on the beach. The sun setting in the west (where else?) lit the sky with a variety of colors. A few stars were visible, including the Evening Star (Venus). This was coupled with good conversation as the group broke up into a variety of twos and threes. The only concern was at the end, where we wondered if we would find Dagsboro St. in the dark.

This vacation reminded me of years ago, when the Alan Gordons and Gary Gordons were getting into two cars -- the usual desire to be with the most kids caused many last minute changes. Attractions at Washington Grove balanced the attractions at the beach. Alan and Alma decided they wanted to see Susan and Sandra in Washington Grove, before the latter departed for Japan, so they left the beach for Washington Grove on Thursday.

We had an overnight visit from Mary Vester, Donald's friend. Her home is a little south of Wilmington, DE, and she is a sixth and seventh grade teacher in a private school. She was in California this summer, where she met Donald. They went for a hike with another friend, and she showed us beautiful photos of California scenery.

Saturday (Aug 26) the remaining seven of us will leave the beach. Donald flies back to California on Sunday, Norman flies back on Tuesday, and Father and I fly to Brazil on Friday. The following week (Sept 5) Sandra and Susan will leave for a year of teaching English in Japan. As we scatter we will take away memories of one more beach vacation, where we renewed family ties, and got new strength for the tasks ahead.

Love to all,

*Gary*