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WHAS

Western Kentucky University

Earl Moore

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"College Heights."

Our program today is an imaginary trip to a faraway Central American republic, Guatemala. The guide for the cruise is Dr. Louis B. Salomon, of our Department of English, who made the trip in person a few weeks ago. This afternoon, with the assistance of the Red and Gray Orchestra, under the direction of Jimmy S. Rutan, he will take you with him on this delightful tour, Dr. Salomon.

If you feel like traveling this afternoon, come with me on a trip to a fascinating little land in Central America—one of the few countries in our part of the world that are not yet spoiled by swarms of tourists. We shall have to make some big jumps in order to get there and back in a half-hour, but if you will trust yourself to my care and hold on tight, I promise to show you some rare sights and yet land you back on American soil by four-thirty.

(Orchestra begins "Anchors Aweigh")

We shall have to make an imaginary jump, first of all, to New Orleans, where we arrive at the United Fruit Company dock just as the stevedores are loading the last pieces of freight into the capacious hold of a big white ship; officers and crew are bustling about, soon the warning whistle sounds, the gangplank is raised, and it's anchors aweigh!
Down through the marshy islands of the delta, through the clear, dark blue waters of the Gulf of Mexico, and into the Caribbean, we sail due south for three days in the company of flying-fish and porpoises, and for three nights under the magnificent starlit skies of the tropics.

Sometime about noon on our fourth day out, if you will come forward with me, I can point out a long black line on the horizon ahead; and during the next hour or two this gradually rises until it becomes a wall of somber, purplish-black mountains flecked with spots of green where the sun strikes them, and rising almost out of the sea itself. This is the coast of Honduras. Straggling along the water's edge among tall coconut palms is the little town of Tela; and down there on the dock stands carload after carload of emerald-

(Orchestra out)

green bananas, the tops and sides of the cars covered with dried palm leaves for protection against the sun. No sooner have we safely docked than a line of native stevedores begins to carry the great bunches of fruit from the cars to a giant conveyor which carries the bananas on a canvas belt over the ship's side and into the hold. See how that inspector watches the endless line; whenever he sees a defective stem he motions the bearer to dump it on the dock, where there are soon enough rejected bananas to feed a regiment. And what does he carry that big machete for—that big butcherknife with a hook-shaped end? Wait and you'll see. There, he sees a bunch with too much of the woody part of the stem still attached; he's raising that wicked-looking machete; and Whish! he just lopped it off about two inches from the nose of its bearer, who doesn't even pause in his stride. And there comes a wheezy little locomotive hauling up more carloads of fruit, and more and more, until it looks as if all the bananas in the world were being fed into the insatiable maw of the ship. Ten thousand stems of fruit is what we are picking up here—something like a million and a quarter bananas.
This is a striking sight, but if you want to see something taken right out of a book, come here and take a look at that squad representing the Honduran army, down on the wharf to see that no one gets off the ship without a landing permit. Those antiquated rifles, with ropes for gun-straps, are the only indications that these are military gentlemen; for each soldier is wearing such pants and shirt as suit his fancy or his pocketbook, and their swarthy, black-mustached faces are shaded by sombreros of various shapes and sizes. They look as if they must find life pretty dull between revolutions.

Well, the last stem of bananas has finally been loaded, the people on dock wave good-bye to us, and we up anchor for Puerto Cortes, where we see the same scene reenacted by artificial light into the late hours of the night while we pick up another ten thousand bunches; and then we sail away on the last lap of our voyage, and arrive in the morning at Puerto Barrios, Guatemala.

You won't notice any comic-opera revolutionists here, because Guatemala is a very orderly, well-run country, with efficient, neatly uniformed officials; but if you stroll around before boarding the train for Guatemala City, you will see several strange things. First of all, there are no streets such as we are accustomed to, for vehicles; there are only paths and sidewalks bordered with palm trees between the rows of yellow frame houses. These walks are filled with Indians, mostly dressed in American clothes, and chatter and laughing as they proceed in a very leisurely manner on whatever their business may be. But look out there! While you were staring at the people, you nearly stepped on something. Never mind; it's walking away now—just a large land crab, moving deliberately across the sidewalk, in its side-wise fashion. No use in being squeamish about the lower forms of animal life down here in the tropics: anything you touch is apt to get up and walk away.
See those large, ugly black vultures perched on the roofs? They take care of the sewage problems of the town.

(Chimes)

But there goes the train bell, and we must get on board the little narrow-gauge train that will take us on a ten-hour journey through jungles and mountains up to the six-thousand-foot plateau on which the capital city is built. We're entitled to sit in the first-class coach, with its wicker chairs and electric lights, but we'll do better to sit in the second-class car, which is pretty much like an American day coach of ten or fifteen years ago, except that it has oil lamps which the conductor carefully lights every time we come to a tunnel and just as carefully blows out as soon as we are through. Our companions here are a few planters and business men who live in Guatemala; and we can see into the third-class car, with its plain wooden benches, filled with Indians carrying baskets.

For the first few hours we are traveling through dense tropical jungle. The wall of green opens frequently into clearings which reveal a native hut with thatched roof, and a tiny patch of cultivated ground. Every ten miles or so we stop at a village, and the train is immediately surrounded by Indian women noisily offering fruit, bread, cooked meat, and cakes for sale. Over on a siding we may see an automobile, without tires, its rims gripping the rails just like the wheels of a locomotive. This is quite customary in many parts of Central America where there are no passable roads.

Late in the morning we begin to climb very gradually, the railroad following the bank of a swiftly moving stream; and after a hurried stop for lunch at Zacapa---for our little train carries no diner---we continue to climb toward the mountain range that we can see ahead in the distance. Leaving the jungle behind us, we pass through successive levels of semi-tropical and then of temperate vegetation. Soon forbidding cliffs tower over us; dark gorges
open beneath us; breath-taking vistas open up between mountains; the oppressive heat of the lowlands gives way to a delightful, mild, dry mountain air. You won't find a more scenic ride anywhere in the world, and the time slips by until before we know it the sun is sinking behind a mountain tip, we emerge suddenly from a narrow pass onto a small plateau, and the train is gliding quietly into Guatemala City, the large, prosperous capital of the country.

(Orchestra begins "La Cumparsita")

Through streets that are a strange combination of old Spain and modern America, we drive from the station to our hotel. The residences are all one-story houses built of stone or stucco, one right up against another, and all built flush with the sidewalk. The yard is inside, completely enclosed; each house has its patio, or courtyard, lovely with flowers, and absolutely private. Some of the walls are tinted in pastel shades of pink, blue, or green, but the plain white of the majority produces a dazzling effect under the glaring tropical sun. They have massive oak doors with brass knockers, and the windows are protected by wrought-iron grills.

Our hotel itself is a luxurious, rambling structure of only one story, enclosing several patios. The lobby, to be sure looks very much like the lobby of an American hotel, but when we sit down there to smoke after dinner, we are entertained by not very American music from a marimba band. Listen, you can hear them now.

(Orchestral interlude)

The next morning we get up early to explore the strange conglomeration that is Guatemala City. What a mixture! Stately Spanish residences, modernistic moving-picture houses, little Indian shops, modern department stores, street markets, Chevrolets and ox-carts. It is as if the place had been constructed for a world's fair, with exhibits representing all the different
forms of transportation and commerce of the last five centuries. Concrete streets end suddenly in century-old cobblestones; busses dispute the right of way with teams of oxen, and Spaniards, Germans, Americans, and Indians throng the sidewalks. And from anywhere at all there is sure to pop up a little Indian boy selling chewing-gum. The extent of his English vocabulary seems to be "Chiclets, sir?" At least, he doesn't seem to understand when you say no.

After a full day of wandering around the city, we come back to the hotel and turn in early to be ready for the automobile trip which we begin the next day, to take us into the higher mountain regions with their picturesque old villages, coffee plantations, gorgeous lakes and waterfalls, and sinister memories of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions which occasionally level entire towns.

Early in the morning we set out over a road which quickly becomes a series of breath-taking turns and steep climbs as it winds through the rugged mountains surrounding the city. In the distance we see the tall cones of three volcanoes; that thin wisp of steam and smoke rising from one of them reminds us of forces yet latent in the bowels of the earth, quiet now, but biding their time. All morning we twist through the hills, stopping in two or three quaint Indian villages with their small one-story adobe houses and ornate Spanish churches, but always approaching the largest of the volcanic peaks. About noon we enter the city of Antigua, which used to be the capital of Guatemala, but which was sadly devastated long ago by a wall of water rushing down from the crater of Mount Agua, the volcano at whose foot it stands.
Now, you may be a hardened traveler, but you have seen few sights to compare with the brightly colored patio where we sit after lunch, a tiled courtyard brilliant with scarlet, purple, pink, and yellow tropical flowers, with a fountain tinkling in the center, with a turquoise sky overhead, and with the majestic purple cone of Mount Agua towering above the tiled roof on one side, a few white clouds clinging to its slopes like tufts of cotton-wool. It has been a long time since it belched forth fire and smoke, and its crater split with a thunderous roar, spewing out tons of water on the unfortunate Spaniards below.

After lunch we drive out into the country to visit a coffee plantation where the beans whose essence graces so many of our breakfast tables grow on the mountain sides shaded by rows of tall forest trees, for they cannot thrive under the direct rays of the sun. Returning, we can stop to inspect the ruins of the old city, mournful reminders of the glory that was New Spain. Especially interesting are the monumental remains of the old Franciscan monastery, once one of the most impressive buildings on the American continent. Some of its towering arches and vaulted passageways, though moss-grown and deserted, are still standing; and if you happen to be a Tarzan fan, you will be interested to know that many of the scenes of one of the recent Tarzan pictures were taken in these very ruins.

(Orchestra begins "Green Eyes")

In the evening we return to the patio to sit under the stars, with Mount Agua only a deeper black outline against the black of the sky. There is music here, too, and if you feel invigorated by the clear mountain air, maybe you will want to dance before turning in. It sounds inviting.

(Orchestral interlude)
Under the rays of the early morning sun we set out again over narrow, twisting roads that never seem to have a level moment. But forget the scenery for a moment, and look at these Indians we are constantly passing on the road: men, women, and children dressed in many kinds of colorful costumes, for the clothing varies so much in different communities that one acquainted with the country can tell from an Indian's dress where he lives. And talk about carrying things! The women, walking bolt upright, are carrying large baskets full of chickens, vegetables, and what-not on their heads; the short, stocky men are bent over under unbelievable cargoes of furniture, pottery, and produce frequently larger than the carriers. And some of them are trotting along, not merely walking. No matter what the size of the load, each of them carries in his hand a large machete, which looks murderous enough, but which as a matter of fact is merely the Indian's tool of all work, from cutting up food to rooting up weeds from between the cobblestones in the streets.

(Orchestra out)

Almost without exception they are a cheerful, good-natured people. As our auto sweeps past them, often forcing them to jump into the ditch to keep from being run over, they turn and smile as if it were a big joke, showing irregular teeth, and the men rolling up their eyes in their dark, hairless faces because the load on their back prevents them from raising their heads. Some of these Indians make furniture or pottery in their homes a hundred and fifty miles and more from Guatemala City, carry it on their backs over the mountain roads in six or seven days, sell it for a few dollars, and then walk back. Others sell their wares in the small villages and towns which have marketday once a week, going from town to town until they have disposed of their goods.
At noon we pause for lunch and a swim in Lake Atitlan, a gorgeous mirror of bluish-green water set in the midst of towering, cloud-girdled mountains; then we set out on the last lap of our trip, which will take us to a lovely little mountain town where we are to spend the next two nights. We climb and twist through rugged mountains and ravines till the shadows grow long, the air becomes quite cool, and we are rolling into a town with the unbelievable name of Santo Tomas Chichicastenango. We will just call it Chichicastenango for short.

Except for our own automobile, the place seems to have changed very little since the days of the Conquistadors. At opposite ends of the quiet open square stand two white Spanish churches, one of them with an old monastery adjoining. The rest of the square is surrounded by low adobe buildings with red tiled roofs. It would seem rather pointless to walk up to anyone here and inquire, "What time is it?" It would be more appropriate, perhaps, to ask, "What century is it?"

We spend the night in the quaint Mayan Inn, waited on by Indian boys in the picturesque black embroidered knee breeches and jacket, and red cloth headdress, which are the native costume of Chichicastenango. The next day happens to be Thursday, which is market day, and as soon as we have had breakfast we walk over to take a look at the open square. Maybe you don't believe what you see. Stop and rub your eyes and then look again. Yes, it must be real, but it's very, very hard to believe. The square, which was deserted last night, is now thronged with Indians in dresses of every conceivable color and pattern, exhibiting for sale everything from native soup, made on the premises over little charcoal fires, to tremendous pottery water jars, and...
sandals made to your measure while you wait. Most of the vendors have put up little stalls consisting of a table for display, shaded by a cloth tent, but many of them merely sit crosslegged on the ground with their wares in front of them, waiting stolidly for customers. Some are selling bright-hued flowers, and a great many have eye-filling displays of handwoven cloths in barbaric red, yellow, blue, and green patterns. The square seems full of people and nobody seems to go away; yet there is a constant stream of new arrivals, prospective purchasers with bags slung over their shoulders, or vendors with their wares on their backs. Try stepping up to a weaver's stall, examining one of his fantastic cloths, and asking him the price. He will name a ridiculously low figure; you shake your head and walk away; the owner calls after you a price considerably lower than the first; you come back, talk it over in what Spanish you can muster, and probably end by buying it. If this happens often, you purchase a bag to carry your other acquisitions in.

(Noise of marketplace out)

Meanwhile, look at the activity over there on the broad white steps of the bigger of the two churches. All morning a number of Indians have been coming and going, some kneeling on the steps in an attitude of prayer, some burning incense on a sort of small altar built right into the steps. The Indians of Chichicastenango are extremely religious, even if their religion is a strange mixture of Catholicism and paganism. For the altar on the front steps is connected with some immemorial rite of their own which they observe before entering the church itself. Let your curiosity lead you into the church, and you will be rewarded by another strange sight. The interior, except for a few seats, some rather primitive religious pictures and images, and a very ornate altar,
is bare, very dark, and very smoky. Down the middle of the floor, from the
door all the way to the altar, stretch several rows of lighted candles, with
rose leaves and pine needles scattered among them. As we watch, an Indian
enters with a candle in hand, lights it, and places it among the others,
scatters his fragrant offering over it, then lowers himself on one knee to
pray. The praying is done aloud, and quite independently by each man, so
that the place is filled with a low babble of murmuring voices, each muttering
an unintelligible prayer that rises with the smoke from the candle flames
toward the dim, vaulted roof.

(Prayer out)

While the sight is a fascinating one, the pungent smoke is likely to
drive us to escape through a little side door into the courtyard of the
adjoining monastery, a place of medieval peace and repose, now used as a
residence by a very remarkable man, Father Rossbach. A native of Germany

(Male chorus begins chant)

a citizen of the United States, and for some thirty years the only priest
in a parish including about thirty thousand Indians who profess the Catholic
faith, the padre is like a figure out of a story-book. He has a magnificent
collection of jade ornaments and other Mayan relics, and he knows more about
the Indians than any other white man in the country. Yet he does not live
in the past: here in this medieval cloister in the fastnesses of the Sierra
Madre, surrounded by and ministering to an ignorant, downtrodden race, you
will find him conversing familiarly and tolerantly of the affairs of the
world today. If he likes you, he may ask you to come back and play chess
with him in the evening. And he will probably beat you.

(Male chorus interlude)
There are many other things to see in Chichicastenango, but our time is
drawing to a close, and I've promised to land you back on more familiar ground
before our period is over. So pile into the cab after another good night's rest in
in the Mayan Inn, and we'll head back to Guatemala City. You must stop for a few
moments, though, as we pass through the town of Sumpango, because it happens to
be the day of a church fiesta, and an outlandish procession moving through the
principal street holds up our car. Every inhabitant of the town, it seems, is
taking part, to the tune of shrill pipes and drum-beating. Hear it coming? Look
at those gigantic figures that look like Mardi Gras comics, about ten feet high.

(Oboe and drums begin)
The Indians devised them long ago, to make fun of the gigantic stature of the
white man, who really towers about a foot above the head of the average Guatemalan.
Then there follow religious images borne by pious citizens with candles and
censers, all moving with a slow solemnity that does not fit in at all with the
barbaric music heard from the front of the procession. Here comes the biggest
figure of all—a tremendous fan-shaped array of peacock feathers fully seven feet
across and twelve feet high, with a gold monstrance set in the center. It comes
at the tail end of the procession, and after it passes we can move on again. These
fiestas are closely bound up with the individual traditions of the various towns,

(Oboe and drums out)

and no two are alike.

Back in Guatemala City we have a day to look around in the parks and shops,
and in the great Mercado Central, or central market, a whole square block of
stalls under one roof, where we can pick out bright knicknacks to take home to
our friends lest when we tell them about the place they may not believe us.
On Sunday morning we board the little train again and retrace the long road down
the mountains and through the jungles to Puerto Barrios, where another boat is
waiting for us. Sometime that evening we slip quietly out of the harbor and
steer straight north for a non-stop trip to New Orleans. Early on the fourth morning we enter the delta; we stop about ten miles below New Orleans for inspection by the quarantine officers; an hour later we land at the Julia Street wharf, where men and machines are already standing in readiness to unload the ship's cargo of bananas into refrigerated freight cars that will take them quickly to the four corners of the country.

So you see, I did get you back to United States territory, after all, but you will have to get yourself home from New Orleans as best you can, and I wish you a pleasant journey, and, as they would say in Guatemala, Adios.

Here we are, back home again from Guatemala, safe and sound. Our cruise has been conducted by Dr. Louis B. Salomon, of the Department of English, assisted by the Red and Gray Orchestra. This program has come to you from the campus of Western Kentucky State Teachers College in Bowling Green.

We convey our cordial greetings to the North Kentucky Education Association, which will be in session in Covington next Thursday and Friday; to the Third District Association, to meet in Bowling Green, on Thursday and Friday; and to the Eastern Association, to meet in Ashland, on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

We invite you to be with us again next Tuesday, same hour, same station, for a program of inspiring music by our College Chorus and our studio orchestra. Two weeks from today our program will be of special interest to those connected with rural schools and will be presented by Western's Rural Demonstration School.

Earl Moore speaking. We wish you Life More Life.

(Strings up and continue)