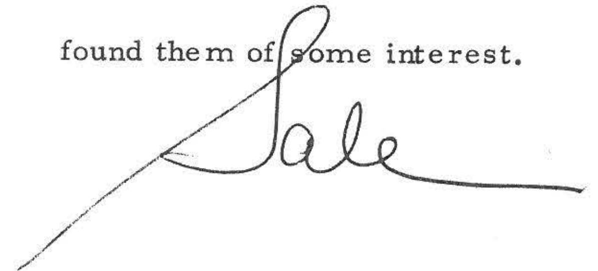
The First National Bank of Chicago
Gaylord A. Freeman, Jr.

This is the last letter of this series. I hope that you found them of some interest.



Moorea
The Society Islands
May 4, 1967

Dear Homer:

"Welcome to Paradise."

It didn't seem an exaggeration when the slender, hairy-chested young man in the dirty shorts jumped from the dock and shook hands with the arriving tourists and returning Mooreans. Anything else would have seemed an understatement. But, unfortunately, it wasn't our stop.

We had left Auckland at midnight and, once aloft, had cocktails and an elaborate dinner which lasted until 2:00 a.m.* We then set our watches ahead to 4:00 a.m., Tahitian time, and, after a two and a half hour rest, were awakened to see the first rays of the sun pinking the clouds atop Mount Orohena and slowly light up the ridges and finally the coastal fringe of Tahiti.

For almost a year Mrs. Freeman has searched for, and found, articles on all aspects of Tahiti, the largest of the Society Islands, its

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* Though a bit late for dinner, I was delighted, for, having spent all of the morning writing my letter from New Zealand, dictating it to a Maori girl whose English was poor and American terrible, and, revising it at the stenographer's office, I hadn't gotten back to the hotel until time to leave and, hence, had not eaten all day.

history, its art, its role in literature. It has been described in rapture by both palette and pen -- but seen in the early dawn it was more beautiful than I believed possible. In an age when the mediocre is described as "colossal," it is a surprise to find something lovelier than it has been described -- but our first glimpse of Tahiti more than justified Captain Bligh's description as the "finest island in the world." *

By seven we had landed, were through customs, read the sign that says there is no tipping in Tahiti, and were driving into the island's only town through the morning traffic, already quite heavy, for offices are open from 7:30 until 11:00 and from 2:00 to 5:00. There is only one road which circles the figure 8-shaped, 47-mile long island, and there were hundreds of cars and perhaps thousands of two-wheeled bicycles, one-lunged Solexes and more elaborate scooters, all headed one way -- to the pleasant, small, waterfront town (population 20,302) of Papeete (pronounced Pappy-ate-tay), which was accurately described in a recent article as looking "like a weather-beaten Mexican border town." **

We first saw Honolulu in 1934, but even then it was at least thirty years ahead of today's Papeete, which has no building over "two-thirds the height of a coconut tree." I suppose Europeans who came here years ago

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* In 1787 Captain William Bligh sailed into Matavai Bay with his small ship, the "Bounty," sent by King George III, to find breadfruit trees and take them to the West Indies.

** "Tahiti," HOLIDAY (February, 1967), which went on to say: "There are parks with magnificent trees, two-story wooden buildings, a cathedral, and plenty of debris and garbage in the streets."

feel that Tahiti was ruined when the airstrip was opened in 1960 and further destroyed in 1962 when the French decided to build an atomic testing site on the Tuamotu-Gamber island group several hundred miles away and supply it from Tahiti. Before the airstrip, Tahiti had only 500 tourists a year. Now they must have 18,000, but I don't believe that we saw one in the two hours that we sat in the sidewalk cafe and walked along the waterfront embankment where lovely yachts from Los Angeles and small inter-island schooners lay side by side, their sterns tied to old cannons half sunk in the quay, or as we waited for our 9:30 boat to Moorea. I feel confident that in a dozen more years there will be at least ten times as many tourists, for this is a lovely part of the world.

I must not sound as though we had discovered Tahiti. George Robertson, sailing the British frigate "Dolphin," did so just 200 years ago next month. Unlike the European captains who discovered New Zealand only to be repulsed with the killing of several sailors, Captain Robertson found "all sorts of refreshments" on his arrival. Indeed, that became the sole complaint of successive captains. With such verdant valleys, such ample breadfruit, bananas, coconuts and fish, * with the girls so inviting

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* As James Morrison, one of those who mutinied against Captain Bligh and stayed on Tahiti, said: "Every part of the Island produces food without the help of man, it may of this Country be said that the Curse of Eden has not reached it, no man having his bread to get by the Sweat of his Brow...."

and the climate so salubrious -- it proved difficult to reassemble a crew to sail away.

Captain Cook came later and named this part of Polynesia the Society Islands out of respect for the British Royal Society which had financed his trip to study the transit of Venus. Though the British were the first ones here, the French took over the government about 100 years ago and maintain it today, with the result that French is the western language of the islands.

It was rediscovered by Paul Gauguin who, forsaking his wife and family and stock brokerage business in Paris, came here in 1891 to become known to the Tahitians as "the man who makes human beings." In his own words:

> "All the joys -- animal and human -- of a free life are mine. I have escaped everything that is artificial, conventional, customary. I am entering into the truth, into nature."

Though he died without either fortune or fame, the latter came to both Gaugin and the Tahiti which he painted with such love.

Robert Louis Stevenson was here late in the last century and "heard the pulse of the besieging sea throb away all night.... heard the wind fly crying and convulse tumultuous palms."

Rupert Brooke, whose Greek-god appearance * had captured the Tahitian's love of beauty in the intervals between his bacchanalian celebrations

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* In London he was referred to as the "Golden Apollo."

in "Pupure's Grove," had written "The Great Lover," "Tiare, Tahiti," and "Retrospect," and sung with pleasure:

> "Crown the hair, and come away,
> Hear the calling of the moon
> And the whispering scents that stray
> About the idle warm lagoon."

Three years later Somerset Maugham, coming by Brooke's route (which we had unknowingly followed) from New Zealand, discovered the overwhelming sensual beauty of Tahiti and stayed to write "The Moon and Sixpence." It must have given that quiet man great pleasure to write about Gauguin, for, after an unhappy youth (which he recorded in "Of Human Bondage"), he, too, had fled his profession, medicine, to pursue an artistic career as a writer -- and like Gauguin, almost starved in the process -- but was rewarded by his enjoyment of Tahiti's beauty.*

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* "Tahiti is a lofty green island, with deep folds of a darker green, in which you divine silent valleys; there is mystery in their sombre depths, down which murmur and plash cool streams, and you feel that in those umbrageous places life from immemorial times has been led according to immemorial ways. Even here is something sad and terrible. But the impression is fleeting, and serves only to give a greater acuteness to the enjoyment of the moment. It is like the sadness which you may see in the jester's eyes when a merry company is laughing at his sallies; his lips smile and his jokes are gayer because in the communion of laughter he finds himself more intolerably alone. For Tahiti is smiling and friendly; it is like a lovely woman graciously prodigal of her charm and beauty; and nothing can be more conciliatory than the entrance into the harbour at Papeete. The schooners moored to the quay are trim and neat, the little town along the bay is white and urbane, and the flamboyants, scarlet against the blue sky, flaunt their colour like a cry of passion. They are sensual with an unashamed violence that leaves you breathless. And the crowd that throngs the wharf as the steamer draws alongside is gay and debonair; it is a noisy, cheerful, gesticulating crowd. It is a sea of brown faces. You have an impression of coloured movement against the flaming blue of the sky. Everything is done with a great deal of bustle, the unloading of the baggage, the examination of the customs; and everyone seems to smile at you. It is very hot. The colour dazzles you."
W. Somerset Maugham, "The Moon and Sixpence" (Bantam Books, 1963), pages 142-143.

Tahiti was discovered some time later by the team of Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall, who brought fortune to themselves and more fame to these islands with their trilogy, "Mutiny on the Bounty" and the two companion books * based on the adventures of Captain Bligh and those who mutinied against him.

Ours, then, wasn't the original discovery, but, exhausted as we were and after another night without sleep, it was an enchanting introduction to a way of life which I did not think could still exist. There is no hurry, no racial tension, no winter, no income tax, and almost no tabus -- "70 per cent of the parents of newborn children aren't married." **

By nine o'clock, with both the humidity and the temperature already in the high nineties, an incongruous fat banker in suit, vest and hard felt hat, and his neatly-girdled wife, perspiring freely, walked through the little groups of barefoot native boys in shorts and their girls in pareus, to seek the shade of the yacht's canopy and the slight breeze of the waterfront.

Seated facing the quay, we had a continuous theater as the boys loaded the ship and the passengers of all colors and costumes, including a stout, unkempt woman in green who was constantly eating potato chips or something out of a bag and looked a bit cross, and a nice couple who conversed in French but spoke a greeting to us in English and introduced

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* "Men Against the Sea" and "Pitcairn's Island."

** HOLIDAY (February, 1967).

themselves as Mr. and Mrs. Rie.* Thus, we were entertained until we sailed for Moorea, which we could see only a dozen miles from Tahiti. It appeared, as Maugham had said, "like some high fastness of the Holy Grail, guarded its mystery....like the unsubstantial fabric of a magic wand." **

It was, indeed, beautiful and the cloud-shrouded canyons, cut into the old volcano cones, did present the mystery of the kind that allows one to imagine beautiful little coconut groves with dancing waterfalls -- or whatever your fancy suggests. To celebrate the beauty or something, the proprietoress of the boat served us ice cold beer. We rounded Moorea, came through a break in the coral reef against which the surf pounds day and night, into the still lagoon and up to the dock. It was there that we were greeted with the "Welcome to Paradise." Actually, it was the Bali Hai Hotel, the name of which awakened in my mind a half-remembered story of three Los Angeles bachelors who had come here.

But that was not our stop. We went on another few minutes to the mile-long, narrow Cook Inlet, "the best anchorage in the islands," running in between two volcanic cones and there to another dock where stood the Hotel "X".

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* Mr. Rie was in this country during the war. His business of importing shells for buttons having been discontinued, he worked for awhile as a plastic engineer at Sampsell Time Control and later at Sears here in Chicago. The two men here he remembered the best were Dick Burke and Bob Quayle, two of our dear friends.

** "The Moon and Sixpence" (Bantam Books, 1963), page 142.

Sometimes things just seem to go wrong. There was no organization at the dock. Nobody welcomed us to Paradise or to any place else. I went into the hotel ("into" is hardly the word, for nothing is closed, but I went under the largest thatched roof) and sought to register, but had to wait for the manager who, it turned out, was the woman in green! If she had not made a favorable impression on us, I fear that we had been even less successful with her. She said that she would take us for two nights but no more. When I explained (pleasantly, I thought) that we had a confirmed reservation, she demanded to see it, though it was packed in the luggage not yet off the dock. She requested that we furnish her with a coupon, but I said that we had none. She was indignant. "Impossible. How could you not have a coupon? If you had not come, whom could I have trusted?" The logic of that assault threw me for awhile, but I pointed out that we were in fact truly here. "That is the trouble -- but only for two days." I felt that Dale Carnegie would not have given her a passing grade and we trudged on down the sandy path, past several groups of dark-skinned people who didn't respond to our greetings or even look up as we passed. Somehow, this fell a little short of how I had imagined Paradise. But our cottage was clean and cool and, after a swim, a drink, a delightful lunch, a very pleasant visit with the Ries, and a much needed nap, life looked up. The rum punches were good, the dinner excellent.

We were in Paradise. Every view was sensuous, the water warm, soft and full of bright-colored fish. But we were strangers in this Paradise -- the only Americans and, as such,tolerated but perhaps not wholly welcome. Another oddity was that we were both of the same race.

From the first sailors to arrive two centuries ago until this morning's jet, the visiting male has found the girls here welcoming. I had read much about this -- somewhat skeptically -- but it is true. At a distance this sounds exciting and I am sure it could be at first hand -- but without becoming missionaries we could see all around us the disadvantages that such liaisons create.

As we sat on the lawn for cocktails, a young man in his late thirties joined us, at his suggestion. A resident of the other side of the island, he had come to the hotel for companionship -- and endless beers -- while his wife visited her children in boarding school in Papeete. A Middlewesterner, raised a good Catholic, educated through high school, successful as an accountant, he came to Tahiti five years ago en route to Australia -- and never got beyond. After six months he went back to the States, arranged his affairs (he has a moderate income) and returned to Moorea, fell in love with a girl from Bora Bora, went through a formal marriage ceremony, and lives with her.

How had it worked out? Was he happy?

"Well, I guess it depends on what you mean by happy."

"What do you do?"

"Well, often there is something around the house to fix and I do that. Here, I have a list of the things to do today. First, write my brother, a priest, in the States. Second, fix a leaky faucet and, third, pump up a soft tire. I get up a list of things like that every day. Sometimes I write a letter -- I've kept copies of all of the letters that I have ever written from here. Maybe some day I'll write a book."

"Has the marriage worked out well?"

"Well, you know how it is. I'd like to go back to the States for three or four months but my wife is very dark. I've told her how it is in the States and she cried, but I think she understands. We have friends in Hawaii. I could leave her there for awhile."

"Is she happy?"

"Well, I guess she would be if it weren't for the kids. You may not like me for saying this, but though I have tried I can't really like the kids. I pretend they're mine, but, of course, they aren't. She had them before I came and it just doesn't seem fair to me to have to support them. It isn't as if she is promiscuous. She knows who the fathers are and both of them ought to help support their own kids. Anyway, I think so and I guess that's what bugs us -- it's those kids."

Others here consider him foolish, not for having married a native girl (each of the five hotel managers I've met here are "married" to local girls who, at 40, are grossly overweight, for here, as in so many primitive societies, a fat wife is prized as a symbol of prosperity and dignity, and their many cute children dot the hotel grounds), but his mistake in the eyes of the other white men here is that he is "married-married." If you live with a girl for any period you are "married" and, despite the virtual certainty of children, the liaison has no legal sanction and lasts only as long as both desire. But a few go through the formal legal ceremony -- they are "married-married," or legally married.

As I wrote this part of the notes sitting in the shade of the palms, I could watch the couple next door as they lay on the beach, both young and alive, he French, she from the islands with a touch of Chinese. They are a happy young couple, but I gather that it is a rare Westerner who can come here as an adult and find continued companionship with a thickening woman who can neither read nor write nor work and has no interest in anything she has not known before. As I was sensing this from the answers to my questions, * Mrs. Freeman read me the end of a story about a Frenchman, Zola, who, sensitive to the artificialities and constraints of modern western society, had come here and settled down with a lovely Polynesian girl, Toma. At this point in the story Toma has made a flower arrangement;

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* Some day someone may take a punch at that nose which I poke into their affairs.

Zola has separated the flowers and asked her to arrange them differently:

> "'Can you do any other arrangements?' Zola asked Toma without looking at her.
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> "'No, this is the only arrangement I make,' she said. She smiled. 'They taught us this when we were children. Mai-tai! eh.'
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> "'Mai-tai,' I replied.
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> "'Mai-tai, and every girl on the island can do this single arrangement, and the girls of the island have been making this arrangement and no other for over four hundred years,' Zola said. His voice was empty.
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> "Zola's face was held in a tight little smile, but his eyes were suddenly deep and black with a strange expression. I sensed that he had looked over the edge of the chasm. Between us hung the knowledge that Toma could make only one flower arrangement, could cook poa only one way, cook fish only one way, make love in only one way, sing in only one pattern of songs, dance one kind of dance. Anything outside of the simple patterns did not interest her. And years ago Zola had come to know all of them.
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> "Zola and I did not discuss this during the remaining days I was on his atoll. We walked and talked constantly, but he never referred to himself. When the PBY returned I rowed the old rubber boat out to it after saying good-by to Zola and Toma. The sweat was pouring into my eyes by the time I reached the plane. I was tired. Just as I shipped my oars and looked again at Zola's house the salty drops of sweat fogged my vision. Zola seemed shrunken, small, hunched, almost bleached. He had stopped waving. Toma seemed life-sized and natural.
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> "He was a prisoner not of a dream, but of those faded years in France that had instilled into his nerves and brain and soul an interest in questions beyond himself and beyond the day in which he existed. He had escaped only the real presence of European life; twisted through his mind like a maze of black jets were a set of conditionings and experiences that had burned into his youthful mind. From these he could never escape.

"Zola is typical of a whole breed of men, of white men that live in the South Seas. Sensitive to the rawness of their native society, they flee to the apparent tranquility of the South Pacific. But by then the damage has been done.

"To every white man in the South Seas this dread knowledge of thinness, sameness, an endless unrolling of identical acts, the haunting absence of distinct personality, must some day be faced. For many it is too much to face. This is one reason why so many of the white men of the Pacific are the most quietly desperate alcoholics in the world. They have burned all their bridges; there is no path back to Paris or Dubuque or London. They must, because of pride and sometimes sloth and sometimes poverty, stay in the South Seas. But the original vision has been cauterized over with the scars of experience. So they must be sustained by alcohol or gambling or opium or driving economic activity or, as in the case of Zola, by a frantic search for the fullest knowledge of a culture that he did not really value.

"There is a lesson. If you want to live in the South Seas start early. Early, very early, our nerves become civilized. It is not easy to then slough off the coatings of civilization; they are more durable and tough than the softer stuff of primitive life." *

I would not write of this aspect of life so fully, but at the Hotel "X" the managers and all of the guests (except the Ries and ourselves) were mixed couples and I felt in large part the strangeness that we felt was but a reflection of the resultant malaise which affected our hosts and fellow guests. It affected the Mooreans who, usually joyous, were, for some reason, quite withdrawn and unresponsive.

We drove around most of the island and were intrigued. There is only one rough winding dirt road. Uncluttered with vehicles, it is an

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* Eugene Burdick, "The Black and the White," Best South Sea Stories (Corgi Books, 1966), pages 139-140.

intimate part of almost every house and yard. It goes through no towns for there is no town in Moorea. There is no airstrip. There are no banks except those on the sides of the streams. There are several schools, several stores run by Chinese, but these are not clustered in any settlement, just set along the 50-mile road that circles the island on the narrow shelf of palm-covered land between the mountains and the sea.

The people reflect their Eden-like surroundings. The young men are lithe, coordinated and, though full of fun amongst themselves, are fairly low-voiced and quiet. They are well muscled with strong, broad feet and seem to have considerable strength, though they seldom expend it. The older men, some of whom, when their hair turns white, are quite patrician, tend to be far too fat -- and have no clothes to hide it, for a pair of shorts and perhaps a pair of sandals are a complete wardrobe. The girls are slender, graceful, soft-spoken, and openly friendly, but few have faces that we would consider beautiful. They wear the pareu, a sheet of printed cotton which they may tie around their necks and wrap around their body, or just wrap it quite tightly around their breasts (perhaps they tuck it into a strapless bra) and let it hang from mid-breast to mid-thigh. It is colorful and clean, but "doesn't do anything for the figure." Indeed, hanging straight down in front, it looks a bit like a maternity outfit -- but with their love of children this is not an objectionable appearance.

Their voices are quite musical, whether they are speaking Tahitian, French or a few words of English. I understand their language contains virtually no words representing intangible concepts. They are not contemplative or speculative by nature, but the language contains many words for a single object. I think there are twenty for the coconut tree in different stages or shapes.

Their music is vocal. The guitar or ukulele merely provides accompaniment. Their voices are pleasant but I could detect only one part -- there was no harmony. Occasionally one voice would ring out with a challenge as in some of our Negro spirituals.

Those that have and keep regular jobs do their assigned chores with dignity and, if you thank them, with a smile, but without any obvious enthusiasm. And if there is a minute's lull, they do not seek something else to do. They sit down, strum a guitar or sing or gossip. Work, except for the moment's need, is unnecessary. Planning is incomprehensible.

Coconuts fall from the trees and, though some are occasionally gathered by the side of the road to wait the copra buyer who must stop and load them, they lie where they fall. There are bananas, papayas, pineapples and grapefruit. They are gathered for today's food but few are cultivated. There are cows, but they are not milked. They do not need to work to live and why else would one work? Life is to be lived for pleasure. The

Calvinistic appreciation of discipline is absolutely incomprehensible. *

On Sunday, sitting by the shore, writing these notes, I could see, 100 yards down the beach, ten young men alternately playing guitars, singing and dancing, and kicking a little ball in an informal soccer game. Further on were two young, beautifully-formed girls lying on the beach waiting to be noticed. Beyond, sitting heavily in the sand were the wives of the two managers watching their brood, stark naked, swimming and playing on the beach. Last night as we sat in the dusk having a pre-dinner drink, those children were playing in front of us, when a thought seized them and a little boy, about 5, played a drum in pantomime, and the two girls, perhaps 4 and 7, danced the hip-swinging dance of the islands.

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* Again let me quote from Eugene Burdick. You may remember him for his "The Ugly American" and "Fail-Safe." An Iowa-born Stanford graduate and Rhodes scholar, he spent part of each year here on Moorea (until his death two years ago) and knew the people. In the story that I quote from above, he described the Tahitian girl:

> "I think I understand Toma and through her, the Polynesian personality. She lives literally in the moment. She loves tiare and her eyes will light up when she sees them, but she will not plant them. She has started vegetable gardens five times at my insistence, but each time has allowed the gardens to wither. She loves radishes, but not enough to grow and fertilize and water them. Three times she has agreed to hire workers to build an outdoor privy next to the bathhouse. But each time the money has gone for calico or tobacco. Flowers, radishes, a privy ... all of these are things of the future and Toma does not think of the future. Polynesians do not know how to calculate future pleasures. I do not know why this should exasperate me but it does." (page 137)

To dance and sing and to make love, those are the point of living. The French understand this but (the Mooreans feel) the Americans don't. They come and want to change everything and make work. They should go home. If it is necessary to let them come to bring their money, perhaps we can put up with it, but don't let them stay.

And they don't! The smart Chinese, realizing that an islander would sell anything for enough rum to give a party, were acquiring land so rapidly that in 1934 the French government felt compelled to prohibit the purchase of any more land by foreigners (except from foreigners). To grant an exception, it is necessary for the local administration to get approval from Paris and that is very rare. This means that there is little for sale and, because of its scarcity, that is at very high prices. I was told that land is sold in strips from the sea to the mountaintop and, as in most places, there is only about a quarter of a mile nearest the beach which is level enough to have any utilitarian value. This makes such land more expensive than any present use could justify. On the other hand, the Tahitians can lease their land and thus some are assured of income in perpetuity.

After the week end at Hotel "X", we moved to Bali Hai for three days of rest and writing (these notes and a speech for the A.I.B.). My recollection had been correct. The young man in the dirty shorts was Don McCallum. A manufacturer's representative in Los Angeles, he,

Hugh Kelley (a lawyer with Shera, Mallory and Kelley), and Jay Carlisle, a floor trader on the Pacific Coast Exchange, all bachelors and either bored or discouraged with their lives, had decided in 1960 to chuck it all and go to Tahiti. Here on Moorea they bought a vanilla plantation which, unfortunately, like most of the plantations here, was a bust. *

So was the Bali Hai Hotel which had not yet had a guest. So the three bought the hotel and, after eighteen months of French red tape, they owned it and received their first guests in June of 1962. In the intervening five years they have worked harder to build up the buildings and the clientele than they ever had in Los Angeles. They have been successful.

The grounds, right on the ocean, are beautifully kept up. The lawns are deeply green around the very comfortable, airy thatch-roofed cottages set amid the palms, which Maugham described as coming --

> "down to the water's edge, not in rows, but spaced out with an ordered formality. They were like a ballet of spinsters, elderly but flippant, standing in affected attitudes "

looking at their reflections. The food is good, the operation organized, and the guests American. The three bachelors have now spread out and have a

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* In the first place, it is a lot of work. As you may know, vanilla is a form of orchid, the seed pod of which is used to produce the flavoring extract. Each plant has to be pollinated individually. Thus, it is hard work. Secondly, the bugs get it. Thirdly, it isn't the best vanilla, and, lastly, Madagascar not only produces better vanilla, it produces all that is really needed. They are now trying to convert the land to pasture and are bringing in some Charolais cattle.

second Bali Hai on Raiatea, about 100 miles west of here, a smaller, more remote and even more beautiful island -- thus like this but more so.

Nothing is perfect. The swimming is poor (because of coral) and when, our first day here, a group of perhaps 100 from the Matson cruise ship, the "Mariposa," came here for the day to enjoy the "biggest show in all of Polynesia," we felt momentarily transported to North Miami Beach -- but that occurs only once each three weeks and by eight o'clock the day's guests had gone.

This is a beautiful spot, gaily cheerful, staffed with local girls who never pass you without a pat. If one has a free minute, she will play the guitar or find another and sing. We have not had to learn the name of any other guest, but when we pass and say good morning, they not only realize that it isn't an insult, they respond in kind.

If you were in the area, this would be a lovely place to vacation -- but you might need to bring some project with you. For one who needed it, it would be a great place to rest and recuperate.

The warm humid air at best relaxes and at worst debilitates. But it can unwind the most tense and I was deeply grateful for that. The constant beauty, the lack of exertion by anyone else quiets one's temptation to help or suggest. With any cooperation on your part, a week here more than any place I know will "knit the raveled sleeve of care...."

But it is not a place for you or me to live, not only because of the humidity or the inaccessibility or the bugs, but because we have lost our innocence.

In one of the articles Mrs. Freeman brought, the author described his stay --

> "The days were the summer afternoons
> of childhood,"

and so I hope they were for him. But for most of us people of the West, particularly we whose businesses require so much of us, escape is not a matter of location -- the water can be cool or tepid, but that counts only for an instant. A magnificent view can be observed but does not compel constant observation. The sun can be bright and we are grateful even as we seek the shade. It may still be true as Morrison said in writing of these islands:

> "Their Inhabitants....are without doubt the
> Happiest on the Face of the Globe."

And the islands offer us some of this same beneficence, a completely salubrious climate without, for the moment, any need of punctuality, formality or concern. But for us it is just "for the moment." For us, over fifty years of discipline have closed the door forever on "the summer days of childhood."

Moorea or Tahiti can offer decompression more equable than Florida and free of retired friends or ambitious borrowers to interrupt your dreams.

The constant rumble of a thousand waves against the coral reef sounds like distant diesel locomotives to which, were we home, we would close our ears. In wondrous clouds which always build up on the horizon, you see full sailing galleons, castles or a mountain range -- but the only images you see are those you brought with you. Like Rorschach tests, those billowed shapes do not create. They only open up the door to what you carry deep inside. The thoughts of business and family, of church and civic responsibilities that have woven strand by strand into our lives -- like the threads that bound Gulliver to the ground, they by their number restrain us.

We come too late to Tahiti. Happiness is no longer for us a matter of geography -- it is a matter of action, of problems, of decision, and occasional victory. I have no envy of the Tahitian's freedom (a man is free or enjoys liberty in proportion to which his life is governed by his own choice). "Freedom is not doing as one pleases but doing as one chooses." *

Our whole education and training is to choose wisely; the Tahitian's is to allow himself to be pleased. Our concepts are quite foreign to the Tahitian. If we but substitute intellect or even curiosity in place of soul, we can accept Maugham's observation, "A soul is a troublesome possession and when man developed it, he lost the Garden of Eden."

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* Ralph Barton Perry, "When is Education Liberal?" (Toward the Liberally Educated Executive), edited by Robert A. Goldwin and Charles A. Nelson, The Fund for Adult Education, White Plains, New York, 1959, page 37.

We lost our innocence a long time ago. We don't want to live in the Garden of Eden -- it has no inside plumbing and one can't be certain that a fifty-year-old Eve would look good in slacks.

I am corny enough to love the United States. I love its people. I even like to work on its problems. But I am intensely appreciative of the chance to see other lands and observe their people.

And so, with that bit of sentimentality, I will end these notes and pack my bags, for we leave at midnight for a long trip that arrives in Chicago the following midnight. Thus, I will close this, the fifth series of letters from foreign travels. As we have had the good fortune to see most parts of the world except Africa and Central America, this may be the last for some time.

I end with more than thanks -- a deep gratitude to you who, over the years, have made it possible for us to see the world -- and to Caterpillar for this particular trip. Though of limited perception, I have been grateful for the chance to observe the institutions, the interests and the aspirations of so many peoples. I don't know that I will be a better banker, but I should be a wiser man.

With deep respect and affection,