

Woodstock Dinner, February 26, 1947

The Gathering and the Dinner

The Park Room of the Parkside Hotel in New York on the night of February 26 was so crowded it reminded one of a third class compartment on the E.I.R. railway at Hardwar Mela time. The people who made up the crowd had one thing in common: all had attended, visited, or heard about Woodstock School. The occasion for the gathering of the clan was the Woodstock alumni dinner celebrating the birth of the Woodstock Committee in America - an organization composed of representatives from the foreign mission boards cooperating in Woodstock to assist in handling the affairs of the school in this country. The faithful had come to New York from near and far, in response to invitations sent out by Eunice Jones Mathews and Catherine Forman. Some of those present had come a long distance to participate in the festivities. Ellen Stewart, for example, had journeyed all the way from Montpelier, Vermont, while Fredericka Ahrens Cobren had forsaken her southern home in Arlington, Virginia, in order to be with the group. Others like Lucile Colvin and Mary Wright - both nurses in New York hospitals - traveled only a few blocks by bus or subway in order to reach the Parkside.

After the initial excitement at seeing again faces which had once been so familiar had abated somewhat, the gathering sat down to a 'khana' of satisfying proportions. Unfortunately, the chef of the Parkside had not been introduced to the delicious intricacies of a Hindustani dinner so there was no curry and rice, but the chicken a la king proved a very palatable alternative. The Hindustani touch lacking in the fare was partially supplied by the table decorations, which consisted of carved elephants, peacock fans, brass lotas, and Indian prints. The menu card did its best to acquaint the emigrants from Hindustan with the unfamiliar American cuisine by translating the names of the various dishes into such items as 'Maharajah ki mafiq Murghi', 'Jabar Ahet ke Alu', and 'Dehra Dun ki Salad'. Between courses, the master of ceremonies, Doug Forman, asked that each person present get up, give his or her name, and tell what he was doing at the present time. With a group as large as this, composed as it was of over 83 people, this was an excellent means of getting a good look at every individual present and finding out what each was doing. A few of the remarks made evoked loud laughter. Ruth Colvin, when asked by the master of ceremonies what she was doing now, answered, "Oh, I'm married." Peg Forman Koys seemed a little bit vague concerning her husband's work.

"What did you say your husband's job was, Peg?"

"I don't know what he does. He never comes home," admitted Peg ruefully.

The Foundation of a Woodstock Committee in U.S.A.

The dinner was further enlivened by the singing of Woodstock songs. Accompanied by Olive Clomes at the piano, the loyal alumni and friends of Woodstock shook the walls of the Parkside with their singing of "Woodstock", "The Brown and Gold", and other familiar Woodstock songs which they had not sung for a long, long time. Then, fortified by the excellent dinner, all present leaned back in their chairs and prepared to discuss the business of the evening.

The master of ceremonies led off by reading out the names of the members of the newly-formed Woodstock Committee. They are:

Rev. J. LeRoy Dodds, India Secretary of the Presbyterian Board
Mrs. Ira Moomaw, representative from the Church of the Brethren
Rev. R.W. Caldwell, Executive Secretary of the United Presbyterian Board
Rev. Roland Scott, former principal of Woodstock

The Woodstock Committee was formed in response to a long-felt need for an organization in this country which would be concerned solely with looking

after the welfare of Woodstock. When he was in New York last fall, Robert L. Fleming decided the time had come for action. With the assistance of certain persons on the Foreign Missions Conference staff - notably Miss Sue Weddell and Dr. Douglas N. Forman - he drew up a plan for the formation of a Woodstock Committee in America. On February 26, just preceding the dinner, the Committee had its first official meeting. What had been a blueprint was now an active organization. The membership is composed of representatives from each of the foreign mission boards, Methodist, Presbyterian, United Presbyterian and Church of the Brethren, that cooperate officially in the maintenance of the school. Each board appoints two or more representatives to the Committee, at least one of these being an executive secretary of the board. The main functions of the Committee will be:

1. To keep in close touch with the Woodstock Board in India and the WOSA secretary in order that the members and representative boards may be fully informed of the needs of the school.
2. To present these needs promptly and effectively to the representative boards.
3. To recruit teachers when the need arises and to arrange for the processing of all candidates who are not prospective appointees of any particular representative board.
4. To secure funds from member boards for specific projects and to meet specific needs.

Letter from Dr. Fleming

Following the announcement of the formation of the Woodstock Committee by Mr. J.K. Mathews (Eunice Jones' husband) an open letter from Dr. Fleming to all those present was read by Mr. Moffatt. Dr. Fleming expressed his regret that the inflexibility of sailing schedules to India made it impossible for him to attend the dinner. He extended his thanks to those who had assisted him in establishing the Woodstock Committee and said that he was confident that this organization would contribute much toward a bigger and better Woodstock. All those present shared Mr. Fleming's regret that he could not be there, for they would like to have given him in person a measure of the thanks he deserves for his service to Woodstock.

Mr. Roland Scott then said a few words about the state of affairs existing in Woodstock while he was principal there during the war. He stressed the very desperate need for books and for funds to pay off the large debt resulting from sky-rocketing living costs in India.

Alumni Organization in the New York Area

The next item on the agenda was consideration of the setting up of some kind of an alumni organization in the New York area. The discussion on this topic proved exceedingly lively. The master of ceremonies was kept hopping trying to channel the flood of motions and suggestions from the floor in one direction. Among the numerous suggestions made were the following: a separate alumni association be set up for the northeastern seaboard; a committee be elected with the purpose of keeping in touch with the alumni in the New York area and serving as a clearing house for names and addresses; a committee be established with the function of raising funds for Woodstock from alumni. The odds and ends which were thrown into the pot of discussion finally boiled and simmered down to the following result: An interim committee composed of five members was chosen. These were: Catherine Forman, Joe Alter, Eunice Jones Mathews, Leo Howard, and Beth McGaw Santantonio. This committee was assigned 5 duties:

1. Obtain the names and addresses of as many Woodstock alumni in this country as possible and send an up-to-date list of those around at intervals to the alumni to keep them informed of each other's whereabouts.

2. Got in touch with the Woodstock Old Students Association secretary, Miss Vera Marley, and find out how the new organization could best fit in with the activities of WOSA.
3. Consider the advisability of having one member of the interim committee serve on the Woodstock Committee of America for the purpose of keeping alumni informed of the activities of the Committee and having on the Committee a person who had received his schooling at Woodstock.
4. Raise funds for Woodstock from alumni, aiming particularly at meeting the needs stressed by Mr. Scott: books, and funds to pay off the debt.
5. Make the arrangements for a similar Woodstock dinner a year from now.

"Heart of India"

With the evening well along and college books or young children to get back to for many of those present, the business of the meeting was quickly brought to a close. The last item on the agenda was the showing of the new technicolor film with commentary, "Heart of India," made by Henri Forger. For half an hour, we who watched were transported back to India by scenes so realistically and artistically portrayed that one could hear the creak of the 'bail gari' creeping down the dusty road and smell the acrid smoke of the burning ghat. The movie follows the life of a village boy of the United Provinces from his first contact with the American missionary when the doctor sahib saves the life of his little sister, through the mission school, into Forman College at Lahore where the boy receives the training which he dedicates to the service of India.

The second half of the 'double feature' was scenes of Woodstock and the Himalaya mountains, taken in technicolor by Dr. Emmet Alter. It is hard to believe that we once accepted those breath-taking surroundings so casually.

The only regret of the entire affair was that still more of you Woodstock alumni could not have been there to join in the good time. We hope you will be able to come to next year's dinner. I think everybody there was astonished at the large number of Woodstock alumni who live in and close to New York, and how really very simple it was to arrange a get-together. Incidentally, everyone at the dinner was in a very generous mood. When bowls were passed around after the dinner for those present to contribute what they wished to Woodstock and the new alumni organization, the cash and pledges taken in totalled \$207.50.

If any of you have questions or suggestions concerning the new organization, or - fond hope - contributions to make to it or to Woodstock, please address your letters to any one of the following: Mrs. James K. Mathews, 54 Morningside Drive, New York, 25, N.Y.; Catherine Forman, 33 Maple Ave., Madison, N.J.; Joe Alter, 619 Kater Street, Philadelphia 46, Pa.; Lee Howard, 2214 Jefferson Street, Baltimore 5, Md.; Mrs. Michael Santantonio, 36-19 167th Street, Flushing, N.Y.

Our salaams to you,

The Provisional Committee for Woodstock Alumni in the New York Area.

PERSONS ATTENDING THE WOODSTOCK DINNER ON FEBRUARY 26, 1947
THE PARKSIDE HOTEL, NEW YORK CITY, N.Y.

J. Alfred & Ruth Dudgeon Adams - N.Y.S. Ag. Expt. Sta., Cottage Rd., Poughkeepsie,
Erma F. Alley - Maxwell Hall, 179 Ft. Wash. Ave., New York 32, N. Y. (N.Y.)
Anna Lesta Allison - Rm 703, 156 5th Ave., New York 10, N.Y.
Bob Alter - 238 S. Market St., New Wilmington, Pa.
Joe & Marian Alter - 619 Kater St., Philadelphia 47, Pa.
Dr. Armp - United Church of Canada, 299 Queen St., West, Toronto 2 B, Canada
Elizabeth J. Beebe - 179 Ft. Washington Ave., New York 32, N.Y.
Kathryne Bieri - 150 Fifth Ave., New York 11, N.Y.
Dr. R. W. Caldwell - United Presbyterian Board, 1505 Race St., Philadelphia, Pa.
Margaret Ahrens Castiglia - 15 Danbury St., S.W., Washington 20, D.C.
Hui Chen - Hewitt Hall, Barnard College, New York City
Rebecca Tinbres Clark - 827 Wilcoxson Ave., Stratford, Conn.
Olive Clemes - 242 West 10th St., New York, N.Y.
William Clemes & Mrs. Clemes - 150 State St., Albany, N.Y.
Fredericka Ahrens Cobren - 4208 2nd Rd., N. Arlington, Va.
Lucile Colvin - 1315 York Ave., New York 21, N. Y.
Ruth Colvin Davies - Rose Tree Rd., Route #2, Media, Pa.
Alice Dodds - 181 Montclair Ave., Montclair, N.J.
Dr. & Mrs. J. LeRoy Dodds - 181 Montclair Ave., Montclair, N.J.
Vida Elliott - 223 Downey Ave., Indianapolis, Indiana
John & Martha Ferger - 231 East 70th Street, New York 21, N. Y.
Alice M. Forman - 924 West End Ave., New York 25, N.Y.
Catherine Forman - 33 Maple Ave., Madison, N.J.
Dr. Douglas N. Forman - 33 Maple Ave., Madison, N.J.
Douglas (Jr.) & Ruth Forman - 13 Inill St., West Haven, Conn.
Hugh M. Forman - Theta Chi, Lafayette College, Easton, Pa.
Kenneth J. Forman - 33 Maple Ave., Madison, N.J.
Mrs. Robert H. H. Goheen - 54 Morningside Drive, New York 25, N.Y.
Ralph & Mary Esch Greener - 1145 Louisa St., Elizabeth 4, N.J.
A. Edwin Harper, Jr. - c/o Mrs. Betty McGuire, 2754 Broadway, New York 25, N.Y.
H. McDonald Harper - 82 Blair Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, N. J.
Doris F. Harrington - 1473 Popham Ave., New York 53, N.Y.
Rev. August Helfers - 260 West 44th St., New York 18, N.Y.
Lee M. Howard - 2214 Jefferson St., Baltimore 5, Md.
Mr. & Mrs. Hugh Irwin - Knox Hall, 606 West 122nd St., New York 27, N. Y.
William & Margaret Forman Keys - 297 4th Ave., New York 10, N.Y.
John C. Lochlin - Eliot House H-51, Harvard University, Cambridge 38, Mass.
Mrs. Edmund D. Lucas - 451 Franklin St., Bloomfield, N.J.
Nancy Eleanor Lucas - 451 Franklin St., Bloomfield, N.J.
Mr. Albert F. Lutley - 306 Gypsy Lane, Wynnwood, Pa.
Mary E. Lutley - 306 Gypsy Lane, Wynnwood, Pa.
James K. & Eunice Jones Mathews - 54 Morningside Drive, New York 25, N.Y.
Dr. Hugh M. Milne - 600 Schaff Bldg., 1505 Race St., Philadelphia 2, Pa.
Dr. & Mrs. E. Marston Moffatt, Sr. - 220 St. James Place, Brooklyn, N.Y.
E. Marston Moffatt - 188 Williams St., Glastonbury, Conn.
Nancy J. Moffatt - 220 St. James Place, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Mr. & Mrs. Ira W. Moomaw - 156 Fifth Ave., New York 10, N.Y.
Miss Emma Morris - 413 West 46th St., New York 19, N.Y.
Myles J. & Laura Slater Mulligan - 1771 Dean St., Brooklyn 33, N.Y.
Arline E. Picken - Home 70, Pilgrim State Hospital, Brentwood, Long Is., N.Y.
Rebecca Wellons Rissmiller - 575 Willow Ave., Fairlawn, N.J.
Charles C. Roadarmel - Granville, Ohio
Kenneth O. Rocky - 9 Kensington Park, Lynn, Mass.
Charles F. & Blossom Root - 235 East 49th St., New York 17, N.Y.
Beth McGaw Santantonio - 36-19 167th St., Flushing, N.Y.
Mr. & Mrs. Roland Scott - 99 Clurmont Ave., New York 27, N.Y.
Ellen R. Stewart - 39 Terrace St., Montpelier, Vt.
Betty Stuntz - Lawrence House, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

(OVER)

Marien Templeton - 343 Willis Ave., Mineola, N.Y.
David R. Wilson & Mrs. Wilson - River Island, Potterville, N.J.
Mary Wright -
Theodore R. F. Wright - Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.