

## REMINISCENCES OF A VARIED LIFE

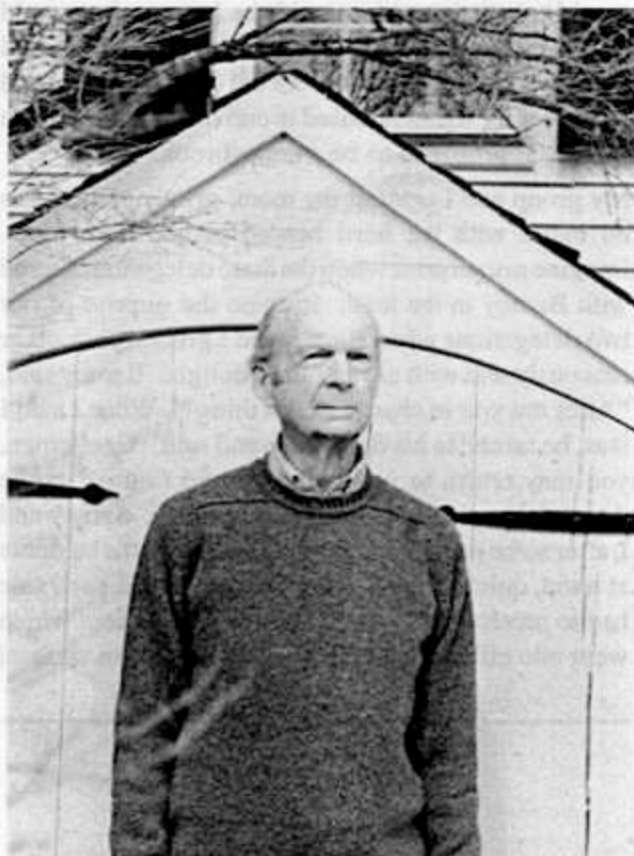
## Henry Beerits

At graduation we were catapulted into that super-depressed world, but I was fortunate in having a golden period during the next 15 months. That summer I drove across the U. S. with classmate Oscar Mertz. Sleeping on the ground in the open air, we drove through the Bad Lands of South Dakota and the Canadian Rockies on 1800 miles of gravel roads, and down the Pacific Coast, including a climb of Mt. Hood. We spent some weeks visiting friends in the San Francisco area and then drove back through the Southwest.

In September I started an assignment in Washington that was the result of my senior thesis, which dealt with the life of Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes. To my surprise he invited me to prepare background material to be used by his eventual biographer, who turned out to be Merlo Pusey, publisher of the Washington Post. It was a stimulating period to be in Washington, with all the New Deal agencies getting under way. I attended White House receptions and shook hands with FDR, but the high point was the contact with the Chief Justice. He was, as a profile in the New Yorker said, the only man in America who looked like a king. His qualities of intellect and character made him one of the truly great Americans produced in this century. The British statesman Arthur Balfour described him as "the most dominating figure I have ever met in public life."

In the summer of 1934, I again drove across the country, and met with ex-President Herbert Hoover to discuss his experience in China. Hoover was a very shy man and quite difficult to talk to. I then sailed via Honolulu to Japan and China. Among other events, I attended a sparkling dinner party on a barge on the Lotus Pond at the summer palace in Peking. The Italian ambassador and his Argentinian wife were hosts for the diplomatic and international set, which included some young British army officers who seemed right out of Rudyard Kipling.

In September I entered Harvard Law School, which was, predictably, a let down. After the first year I transferred, for a change of scene, to Harvard Business School, living in a dormitory of law students, many of whom were Princeton graduates. That year I had breakfast with the "theologs" at the refectory of the Episcopal Theological School, lunch at a dining hall at the business school, and dinner at a rather elite eating club at the law school - a broadening experience.



Subsequently, I returned to law school and graduated. During these years I managed to do some more traveling - Bermuda, Nassau and Cuba; Europe with Oscar Mertz, including a visit to Andorra; and by graduation I had been in all 48 states.

From time to time I visited the Bryn Mawr and Cape Cod homes of Walter Janney, '34, who had four attractive sisters, and occasionally I coincided with classmate Frank Pace, who was visiting the glamorous Peggy Janney, whom he subsequently married. I started the practice of law in Philadelphia, where I spent my entire career. Branching out into civic affairs, I served as Chairman of the Joint Committee on City Planning. We produced a proposal for establishing a city planning commission which I presented at a large luncheon meeting attended by the Mayor. He was interested and asked us to develop it further. But before we could do it he suddenly died. His successor was the President of the City Council, who said that in all his 22 years in the council he had never seen a need for city planning. But

we were able to organize public support which led to an ordinance and the appointment of a strong Commission. I became Chairman of the Citizens Council on City Planning which served as liaison between 175 citizens organizations and the Planning Commission.

In 1943 I married Janet Robinson, who had just spent a year on a ranch in Montana as an antidote to having spent four years on the faculty at Wellesley. A decade later, with three children, we were living in a Georgian house where the Prince of Wales (Edward VIII) had once been entertained.

I took time out from legal practice and spent a year on the staff of Girard Trust Bank, and then several years as Associate Executive Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). It had a large staff and large budget, engaged in programs on race relations, international affairs, youth and relief services, with offices in the U.S. and projects in a dozen foreign countries. It had been a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

I returned to legal practice with a large law office in the city. Continuing to be active in civic affairs, I served as Chairman of the City Policy Committee which was composed of lively characters from various occupations who had an interest in city government. I also became president of a fine old agency, the Philadelphia Housing Association and was active as an organizer of Penjerdel, whose purpose was to improve intergovernmental cooperation in the local area. My primary activity, however, was with AFSC, where I became Chairman of the Board, a demanding responsibility which landed me in Who's Who.

Retiring from legal practise at the youthful age of 60 I had an enjoyable time writing four books - American history and biography covering the early part of this century. Although I received complimentary letters, instead of the usual rejections slips from publishers, these books were not accepted by either commercial or university presses so I fell through the cracks and remained, for the time being, "unwept, unhonored and unpublished."

At the same time I served as a volunteer at the AFSC Program at the United Nations. Their Quaker House was the site for very successful meetings of U. N. delegates. The Ambassador from a European country told me that when he had lunch with several of the other U.N. delegates they could not escape talking on a diplomat-to-diplomat basis, but when they met at Quaker House they talked man-to-man, free from the

constraints of their countries' foreign policies. I wrote a book, "The United Nations and Human Survival," which was published by AFSC. The U. N. thought well of it and put it on sale in their book stores. It was used as the basis for courses at a state university in Ohio and at Dartmouth.

In retirement I have taken trips to Mexico, Alaska, Hawaii, the West Indies, and several extensive trips to Europe. On one of these I served as chairman of a conference on how to save the Mediterranean from biological extinction. Attended by diplomats and scholars, it had the unstated purpose of getting the Arabs and Israelis to speak to each other (this being before Sadat's dramatic trip to Jerusalem opened the door to communication), and in this the conference was successful.

In 1978 we moved to Maine and settled in the mid coast area, about 50 miles from Portland, in an 1820 house in a small village on a broad tidal river in a setting reminiscent of the English countryside. We also have a summer home at Deer Isle, a more isolated area, near Mt. Desert Island. I have become increasingly interested in art and was president of an organization that published a periodical on the visual arts in Maine. I also headed the Deer Isle Artists Association, some of whose members are well recognized artists. I have taken up painting - landscapes and coastal scenes in gouache (opaque watercolor), and with no instruction and minimal technical proficiency, have achieved some degree of success, my works having been exhibited in 18 galleries in Maine and private collections in 11 states.

My major activity has been with charitable organizations. After chairing our county chapter of the Red Cross, I became involved with the hospital in a nearby town. It is a small but excellent hospital which has served as a role model for other small hospitals. We have a large outpatient department, a home health agency and a hospice program. The parent foundation also owns a medical office building, a nursing home, and a retirement home. Having been president of these organizations, I am now heavily involved in fund-raising for a major renovation and expansion of the hospital.

So here it is 1992. There is still work to be done, and I am living in this beautiful backwater, still enjoying a very happy marriage after 48 years, with our three children and five grandchildren living nearby. Not a bad situation.