Chapter 23

A TRIP TO CUBA AFTER FIFTY YEARS

On December 23, 1953, we left Ft. Pierce at 3:00 A. M. and drove to Miami, where we took a Pan American Airlines plane for Havana. The "we" consisted of myself and wife, Hattie; Mr. and Mrs. C. P. Brady of 211 South 25th Street and Mr. and Mrs. Max Perkins of Los Angeles, California. Mrs. Perkins is Hattie's daughter, Myrtle. The occasion was a reunion of Hattie's family, the first in sixteen years. The Bradys went along for the ride—and what a ride!

Mrs. Perkins' nephew, by her former marriage, met them at the airport and took them to visit among her former in-laws and friends. I had arranged before we left home to have a "Hertz Drive It Yourself" car to meet us at the airport. Just as soon as we could get through Customs and sign the necessary papers, the four of us took off for the East. The Hertz driver took us outside of Havana and put us on the National Highway. By that time it was noon.

We stopped at a wayside open-air restaurant and the Bradys got their first taste of Cuban cooking. The beef was so tough they couldn't eat it and Brady had so much coffee put in his milk he couldn't drink it. He poured part of it in the street and had the cup filled with milk. When he learned the proper proportions for his milk and coffee, he became very fond of their "Cafe' con Leche".

Shortly before sundown we had one of our most enjoyable surprises of the whole trip: A real honest-to-goodness motel! One of the finest I have ever seen anywhere and the first I had ever seen in Cuba. The price was high; $8.00 per couple per night; but everything was new, clean, and just perfect, so we stayed. We had supper in a likewise surprising place. After supper we asked if they had any cards advertising the place. They had. Another shock! It was owned and operated by the Bacardi rum people! When Hattie saw that she asked, "Are we going to stay?" We didn't know it when we went there. We hadn't seen another decent place to stay so I told her we would take it as Paul told his people to do about meat

offered to idols. "In whatsoever house ye enter eat whatsoever is set before you, asking no questions for conscience sake." We stayed.

Next day we came into the tobacco country and I took some pictures of tobacco fields and big palm-leaf tobacco barns with lightning rods on them. I learned years ago that a Cuban doesn't think enough of his family to protect them with lightning rods but almost every tobacco barn has one. I never knew a palm-leaf shack to be struck by lightning. I don't know if there is something about the tobacco that draws lightning or if the lightning rod people have exceedingly good salesmen. Anyhow, they have been putting them on over forty years, to my certain knowledge.

Next, we stopped at Guayos where I was Superintendent of Construction and Resident Engineer of the Vega Sugar Mill just thirty-nine years ago. I asked at a filling station if some of the men I remembered were still there. They had all died or moved away. Then I asked if there was anyone there who helped build the mill. He said he was the ten-year-old boy who led the oxen that pulled the freight cars around the yard. I told him I was Superintendent of Construction. He didn't remember titles but began naming the bosses. The second one he named was Mr. Williams. He was very much surprised when I told him I was Mr. Williams.

Then, we went over to the mill and I introduced myself to the manager. He took us through the mill and showed us his new automatic truck dump. The driver backs his truck onto the dump and when it reaches the end of the floorboards the wheels drop onto a pair of rollers and their turning lowers the back end of the truck and raises the front end. When the load slides out onto the mill conveyor, the driver throws his truck into forward gear and the same rollers raise the rear end and lower the front end. The driver never leaves his seat and the dump is ready for the next truck. He told me that the company doesn't own a single ox any more. All the nearby cane comes in on trucks and the more remote still comes by railroad cars. He invited us over to the house to meet his family and I took some pictures of them and, also, of his beautiful yard. This trip

sure brought back many memories. At the Jatibonico River I stopped and took a picture of the historic bridge that changed the history of Cuba during the Chambelona of 1917.

By noon we reached the home of Charles Kinsey, my wife's younger son, between Ciego de Avila and Ceballos. He has one of the nicest orange groves in Cuba and he has built it up himself. A couple of years ago he bought an adjoining farm that had some sugar cane on it. He spent about twenty-five thousand dollars planting more cane and now the Government won't let him grind it because there is already more cane than enough for the Cuban quota of world production.

On Christmas day, the entire Clan, with neighbors and friends, assembled to eat the fatted kid—in Spanish, chilindron—with all the trimmings. (I should add, in passing, that Charles' land is red land, underlaid with limestone in which is an inexhaustable supply of water. His groves have been built up with irrigation.)

On Saturday the 26th, the Clan met again — this time at the home of Anthony Rutz. Mrs. Rutz is a sister of Mrs. Charles Kinsey, which ties them into the Kinsey Clan.

Some fifty years ago, more or less, Anthony's father bought three thousand acres of land on the north side of the Caonao River, about half-way between the railroad and the north coast. It was miles from anywhere and no road. You could get out in an ox cart in the dry season and on horseback at any time that you could ford the river. Some three hundred or four hundred acres in the river valley was good land. The rest of it was so poor the average Cuban wouldn't take a second look at it, much less fence it in. When his brother and sister grew up, they left for greener pastures but Anthony gritted his teeth and stayed with his father. When the old man died, he bought his brother and sister out. By grit, intelligence and hard work it is today one of the show ranches of eastern Cuba.

Originally, the only water in the dry season was in the river, the southern boundary of the farm. After a cow drank and started to graze, she was thirsty again before she reached the far side. Result, the

grass at the far side—poor at best—was left unpastured, then burned at the end of the dry season so the grass would come up fresh and green when the rains began. With the burning, what little fertility there was in the soil was burned out.

Anthony planted some oranges on his bottom land; then built a pond on higher ground to irrigate it. With that pond, he learned something. Earth dams leak. Water seeping through the dam, not only keeps grass growing on the dam but on down the valley. Furthermore, the capillary attraction keeps grass growing for quite a distance all around the pond; and, as the water recedes, the grass comes up nice and green where the water was. With water close by, the cattle eat the poor savanna grass and, by not burning the grass, the pasture is increasing in fertility. He now has fifteen ponds and said they had cost him an average of one thousand dollars a pond. He had already received more than that out of them in cash benefits. Originally, his cows would only produce calves once in two years on account of poor pasture. Now most of them calf every year. He has built a large brick house, a barn, corrals, etc., and has his own electric plant with refrigerator, deep freeze, etc. He got his neighbors to join with him, and with some help from the government, they have built a gravel road to connect to the central highway. With a road, the milk truck from the cheese factory picks up his milk at the corral. He has over six hundred head of cattle and was milking one hundred when we were there. Roast pig, with trimmings, was the menu at this feast.

Next day, the Bradys and I set out for eastern Cuba. Hattie stayed to visit with her children. In Camaguey, we visited the Stones—friends of long ago. There we found Max Robinson, who, as a boy, spent one summer with us while his mother went to the United States. He was at present just over for Christmas from his job at Nicaro, a nickel mine where the United States Government is taking out nickel. We invited him to ride over with us, but he said that would be cheating him out of part of his vacation. He told us that when we got to the gate at Nicaro to ask for him or we probably would not get in.

Next, we stopped at Omaja which at one time was

the second largest American Colony on the island, where I was, for a few years, the Colony surveyor. I hunted up Charles Nye, an Englishman, last survivor of Colonial days. He went with us out to the cemetery where my father is buried.

Next, we stopped at San Lorenzo where I had set-up bachelor quarters just fifty years before and visited some of my Cuban friends. When I lived there I noted that there were no coconuts in the neighborhood so asked if they wouldn't grow there. I was assured that they would, so when the rains came I inquired where I could find some. I was told where, but it was several miles away. I took a gunny sack and set out on horseback to get them. I was told that to plant I must get them with the husk on. Twenty-five was all the sack would hold. I mounted and the man I bought them of put the sack up behind me. It was so bulky it was really hard to hold on but I managed till we came to a deep mud hole. There the pony got completely stuck. To get off in the mud; get that sack to dry land; work the pony around so she could get out; put the heavy, bulky sack back on; and get up in front of it was a job that required almost superhuman effort. It took quite some time but somehow I managed it. I planted the whole twenty-five. I had intended to plant one hundred but one trip was enough. I never went back. Twenty-two grew. Now, after fifty years, nine of them are still living. They are very tall. I took a picture of them. In 1930, while working on the highway, I took a run down there. As I drove up in front of the store, I heard one woman call to another—"O, Mother, here is the Americano of the Coconuts." The one that called was not over seven or eight years old the last time she saw me. By this time she was the mother of five or six children. She still remembered me! As mine were the only coconuts anywhere around they had changed the name of my farm to "The Coconuts".

We wound up that night in Holguin, my old stamping ground. I could write a book about my experiences there and related happenings of fifty years ago. We speak of towns bursting at the seams—Holguin certainly has. Fifty years ago it was a little village away out on a worthless savana beside a barren mountain—no agricultural land for miles in any direction. Its only transportation was a narrow-gauge

railroad to Gibara.

It is still on the savana and still has the narrow-gauge railroad. It, also, has a standard-gauge railroad connecting it to the main Cuba Railroad,and the Central Highway runs right through it. But these are not enough to justify its spreading over the savana like it has—much less climbing up the mountain side. It is, so far as I know, the only place in Cuba where gold has been discovered but the gold mines haven't produced any great stir. I inquired for the best hotel in town and was directed, not to a building on the plaza, but to one on a one-way street away off from the highway and railroad and far from the center of town. It was as much of a surprise as the motel we found coming from Havana—a really first-class hotel, Hotel Patallo, and rooms only $5.00. I told him he should be on the highway. He said he realized it now, when it was too late.

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This is a very small world. On our way home from Cuba we spent a night in Miami with John Rutz, brother of Anthony of Cuba. In the course of conversation he told me that his neighbor had been a miner in Cuba. I asked where—he didn't know. So I asked him to introduce us. To my surprise he is part-owner of a mine adjoining the Santiago Mine, the one that was worked during Spanish times. The two mines are closed down now because of a boundary dispute. They have a shaft down two-hundred-fifty feet and are hoping to get the boundary dispute settled soon so they can go to work. These miners are always hopeful. I am not positive but think from the description that his mine is the one I found a trace of, and Arrowood discovered. If so, it is another fortune that slipped through my fingers because I didn't close my hands on it. If it is, it is just as well. Fifty years is an awfully long time to wrestle with the same headache, and think of all the fun I have had in those fifty years.

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While in Holguin, by request of Rev. McKinley, pastor of the First Methodist Church in Ft. Pierce, Florida, I went to call on Rev. Evans, pastor of the Methodist Church there. He was not at home so I went over and called on the Quaker preacher. Their work was started fifty years ago, a year or two before

Fletcher started the Methodist Church there, and has grown wonderfully. The school started with just one teacher—a Mexican girl, Maria de los Santos Traveno. I didn't think to ask how many teachers it has today but it has over five-hundred pupils.

What little education strong-man Batista has, he got in the Quaker Mission at Banes. Many of the tenets of the Quaker faith he has either by-passed or forgotten but at least three he clings to: Desire to help the common man; desire to help education; and desire to avoid bloodshed. Other revolutions in Cuba have always been bloody. His last one was bloodless. Many of the present laws have been termed Communistic. They are not. They are made with a genuine desire to raise the level of pay for the poorer classes. In some cases, it looks like they may have gone so far as to kill the goose that is laying the golden eggs because he has moved in the right direction a little too fast. He has built and is building permanent schoolhouses all over the island to replace the palm-leaf shacks. While doing this he did not forget his Alma Mater. When he built his schoolhouse at Banes, instead of turning it over to the Board of Education to operate, he turned it over to the Quaker Mission. Remembering that Rockefeller offered a large sum of money to a college several years ago and they turned it down on the grounds that it was tainted money, I said, "That would be tainted money, wouldn't it?"

My informer replied, "Rev. Applegate, a prominent minister of the Quaker Church says, 'The only trouble with tainted money is 'taint enough of it!'" On the other side of Batista's ledger, it is rumored—tho' I couldn't confirm it—that when he divorced his former wife, the property settlement with her was eighteen million dollars. If true, he didn't acquire that with Quaker frugality.

Leaving Holguin, we traveled for several miles over a high, worthless savana looking over the immense, fertile Coastal Plain. There was little in sight but a great expanse of waving cane, studded with stately royal palms. It extended on the north to the Atlantic Ocean, on the east to the Mayari' River and the Pinales Mountains, and on the south beyond the Cauto River to the foothills of the Sierra

Maestra Mountains—Cuba's highest. When I first went there, there was only one sugar mill, the Boston mill, near Banes. Practically all the rest of that great expanse was primeval jungle. Today there are eleven large sugar mills. My small part in changing the face of this expanse began early in 1905 when I got a job with the Nipe Bay Company as overseer at Guaro, clearing land and planting cane for what is now the Preston Sugar Mill.

We stopped briefly at Guaro to view the changes. The two-story palm-leaf shack that served as our camp had been replaced by a group of permanent houses. The railroad and river bore the same relation but the river looked awfully bare with all the jungle gone. At Mayari' both the paved road and the coastal plain ended. From here on, both the road and the country were rough. The solid cane fields were replaced by farms of bananas, coffee, beans, yuca, etc., with patches of native jungle where the ground was too steep to farm. Here Brady put his hand to the handle of a Cuban plow which very much resembles the kind used in Bible Times.—He didn't look back!

At the Nicaro gate, we had the gatekeeper phone Max Robinson and he got permission for us to enter. Max showed us around the place but the whole thing belongs to Uncle Sam and no one is allowed through the buildings without a pass from Washington. The mine they are working on is only one percent nickel, one percent cobalt, and several percent iron. At present they are taking out the nickel and pumping the rest out into a big swamp. They have a pilot plant there experimenting to find an economical method of extracting the cobalt, also. According to a Cuban paper, the United States is going to spend another forty-five million to enlarge the plant and that will make Cuba rival or surpass Canada in the output of nickel.

The road ends at Nicaro so we had to turn back to Holguin. Next day we set out on the National Highway for Santiago, the end of the road. In Santa Rita, we stopped briefly to inquire for a fellow engineer named Le Cato, who met a girl there when we were building the railroad in 1909 or 1910, married and settled down. I learned that both he and his wife are dead. Some of his children live there but I

didn't take the trouble to look them up.

At Palma Soriano in the edge of the coffee country, we went through a coffee hulling mill. Later, we stopped and got a picture of some chocolate pods. They grow from the trunk of the tree and large limbs—not from small branches.

Next we stopped at El Cobre to see the chapel and the image of the Virgin of Charity, who is today the patron saint of Cuba. The Catholic Church has put out quite a pamphlet telling of the finding of the image, its various places of abode and miracles performed. Lest I should make a mis-statement I have it here and am translating a few passages.

"In 1628, three men, two of them native Indians, brothers, Rodrigo and Juan de Hoyos, and a native Negro boy, about ten years old, Juan Moreno, set out with their boat for Nipe Bay to get salt. They stopped for the night at a place called French Key. The weather was so bad they couldn't go on for three days. On the fourth day they set out on a sea, now quiet, and saw in the distance a white object that looked like a bird that spread its wings and touched the surface of the sea. When they arrived where it was, they were very much surprised to see that it was an image of the Sacred Virgin with a beautiful boy in her left hand. When they arrived they noted that she was floating on a small board, and that she was not wet in spite of the very bad weather they had been having. When Rodrigo de Hoyos reached out to take her on board, he read in luminous letters, 'I am the Virgin of Charity'."

I have two questions to ask. The image is of wood, where did it come from? Did it come down from Heaven? When did the Spaniards start teaching native Indians to read? There are many recorded stories about her miracles, and many more not recorded. There are many crutches there left by people she has healed. They hang out in the open for all to see. There are, also, many rich jewels given by people she has healed. They are in glass-covered cases under lock and key.

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I heard an unrecorded story years ago. In the days of Spain someone gave her a very valuable necklace. Spanish soldiers had to serve without pay and

were not noted for their piety. Suddenly one came who was very pious and spent much time every day in prayer before the image. At first the priests watched him and never left him in the church alone, but later they saw he was so very pious they quit watching so closely. Then they discovered the necklace was missing. A priest found it in a pawnshop in Santiago and went in to investigate. The pawnbroker said a soldier brought it in and produced the soldier's name, company and regiment. The priest went to army headquarters and asked if they had such a man. They had and they produced him. To the priest's very great astonishment, it was this pious soldier. The priest was sure he had been "framed" as so pious a man could not steal. Nevertheless, he had gone this far and couldn't retreat, so he said, "Why did you steal the Virgin's necklace?"

The answer, "I didn't steal it; she gave it to me. My parents were married late in life; I am their only support and they are both in ill health. I was drafted into the army and they are in dire want. I prayed the Virgin for some way to help them. One day she told me to take the necklace and get what I could for it and send it to them. I obeyed her and the money is now on its way to Spain."

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I told this to the priest who showed us around and asked him if it was true? Instead of answering he said there are so many rumors and he proceeded to tell me another.

"The Virgin had a big diamond in her forehead; three men broke into the chapel and cut off her head and were trying to get away when they were discovered. They killed one, one escaped and a third, who carried the head, was able to get into a mine tunnel. They caught him, recovered the head and put it back on her." I asked if they could see where the head had been replaced? He said you couldn't see it from the floor.

When we got to Santiago I was running very low on films for my camera. I hired a chauffeur to take us all over the city looking for some but failed to find any. He took us out to Morro Castle. There was no Custodian there, but he knew it well enough to show us all the rooms but didn't know historical events and couldn't tell us where Lieutenant Hobson

was confined after he sank the Merrimac in the channel to bottle up Cervera's fleet. When I came around the south coast of Cuba, during the Negro Rebellion of 1912, several of Cervera's sunken fleet still protruded above water. I thought if they were still visible I would hire a boat and get some photographs of them. I couldn't see any of them from the headland and the chauffeur knew nothing about them.

Next, we went out to San Juan Hill where the peace treaty with Spain was signed.

During Spanish times, if the relatives of the dead didn't pay the rent on the graves, the bones were dug up and thrown into a bone-yard in the corner of the cemetery. Brady had seen a picture of it brought back from Cuba by someone who had been there, and wanted to see the real thing. I had heard that the practice had been discontinued, so asked the chauffeur. He said they still dig up the bones but put them in boxes. I asked if we could see them? He said we could see the boxes but couldn't go near them and we most certainly could not see the bones. So we went back to Bayamo for the night.

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When we were locating the railroad there in 1909, the Baptist Missionary insisted I fill his pulpit on Sunday morning. He filled it in the evening. If I do say it, and I oughtn't to, he preached a better sermon than I, but I put it into better Spanish than he.

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After supper I went over to the church for a friendly chat with the present pastor. They have a new and much larger church. Mr. Hagerman, the pastor in 1909, resigned the following year. From conversation with him and with his assistant after he was gone, I am satisfied he left on account of homesickness. He probably would not admit it, but that happens more frequently than most people realize. It is very romantic to go into a foreign country as a missionary but when one meets the dirt and filth of mission lands, the hard work and primitive conditions and can't talk with anyone, the homesickness just penetrates and it takes strong character to resist and carry on.

Next morning, we went to Cayamas de Cauto on the bank of the Cauto River where I had my camp when I

was building the railroad. I was Resident Engineer on 30 kilometers or nineteen miles. That is an unusually long residency but I managed it. I found but one person there who remembered me, but found a sale going on and Brady and I each indulged in a Panama hat.

For centuries Cuba has been a rice eating country but has never produced any. Since the quota system on sugar has gone into effect, the sugar companies began looking around for something else to plant. Within the last few years, they have started importing American machinery and planting rice. The flat Cauto Valley offers a good setting for rice and they are planting many thousands of acres. I predict that very soon Cuba will make a dent in our southern rice planters' market.

Next, we went to Gibara on the north coast where I first landed in Cuba. Though only about twenty miles from Holguin, it is as dead as Holguin is alive. In fact, I think it is the deadest town we visited on all our trip. It is built right out on the open sea and the waves are constantly pounding against its coral foundation. It not only has not grown but the ocean has eaten away a large chunk on the north side, including a street and two or three big, old warehouses. It was a walled town. Most of the wall is gone. I suspect it has been taken away for building. There are only two or three decent streets in the town. We went by the Quaker Mission. It was the only place in town that looked alive. There had been a big addition to the church which I suspect is a school and the whole building is nicely painted.

Next we went up to the cemetery where I saw the bone pile years ago, hoping I might find what Brady wanted. The cemetery had been very much enlarged. The keeper said they got to having to dig up the bones so green that relatives made complaints to the authorities. They enlarged the cemetery and told them not only to quit digging them up but to bury what were there. The cemetery is walled and there was no way to haul dirt in to bury them. They had merely put grass and rubbish over them. The keeper was certain he could find us some bones, so he proceeded to scratch out a skull and a few bones and we photographed them.

Hattie's daughter, Ruth, now Mrs. R. J. Martin of Maplewood, New Jersey, was flying in that day, so we

hastened back to the old Kinsey homestead at Algarrobo, now occupied by Ralph Kinsey. Next day, December 31, was the real reunion. All the children, and all the grandchildren but one, and many old time neighbors and friends were present; forty-four in all. The feast was roast pig with all the trimmings. One prominent guest was Hugh Symmons—for many years the best—the last American passenger conductor on the Cuba Railroad. I had not seen him for many years and it really seemed like old times to see him again. On the next day, we went down to see Ralph's newly purchased farm, where he is clearing the land and planting rice.

Again, I say this is a very small world. On our return, we found John Sundheimer, wife and grandson. He knew my oldest sister and family and all her husband's family in Wabash, Indiana. I knew his brother in Arizona and Ruth and Myrtle went to school to his wife in Camaguey, Cuba, before he married her.

Next day the Bradys and I set off on another expedition. We went to Camaguey and hunted all over town for more camera films. We found only one roll.

Almost everyone has heard of the King cattle ranch in Texas, largest cattle ranch in the United States. Few people in the United States have ever heard of the Manati' Sugar Company. I have. I was Field Engineer there in its early days but that is another story. Years ago the Manati' Sugar Company bought a large tract of land lying between Manati' Bay and Nuevitas Bay, intending to plant it in sugar cane. With the quota placed on Cuban sugar, they couldn't do it. About two years ago it made a deal with the King Ranch to clear the land and convert the whole area into another cattle ranch. With my inherent desire to go places and see things, I had to have a "look see". That is one of the most isolated places in the flatlands of Cuba. I don't know if they got any help from the government or not, but they began by building a hard-surfaced road clear around Nuevitas Bay to their holdings. I don't know the distance but it must be well over twenty miles and had two or three large streams to cross. This road runs through an almost uninhabited region which, prior to the war of 1868, was some six or eight sugar plantations; some of them large enough to have narrow-gauge railroads to handle their cane and sugar.

The King Cattle Company has, also, built an airport and is clearing land with bulldozers and is planting pasture. They have a few, but not many, Santa Gertrude cattle, a new breed developed on the King Ranch in Texas by crossing the Zebu cattle with American breeds.

Next, we went to Nuevitas where there wasn't much to see except the newly built road to it. I had a nice visit with Angel Justi, who was my head machete-man on my survey of the North Coast Railroad in 1911-12, and later my boatman when we sounded the bay for dredging for docks. He is now, and has been for several years, Chief Pilot for the Port of Nuevitas.

Next we went over the new road to Sola where I was building a sugar mill in 1920 when the price of sugar slid from 23¢ for raw sugar down to 3¢. At Sola we found the cheapest hotel we found on the trip. Not first class but the beds were comfortable and clean. Next day, we went to La Gloria, the oldest and largest American Colony on the island. At one time there were more than a thousand Americans in and around there. Today there are very few Americans there, but the place is far from abandoned. Americans sold out to Cubans and the Cubans are carrying on in grand style. In 1932, they had a hurricane that destroyed most of the houses but they have been rebuilt—mostly as one story houses—and others added. I lived there during the revolution of 1917 and had my full share of exciting and trying times. The house I lived in is still standing. We visited all the Americans I knew, and could find, and returned to Algarrobo. As time was running out for the Perkinses and Bradys, the five of us left for Havana next day.

We had heard much about Batista's T. B. Hospital in the mountains of Trinidad. Trinidad is a very old town near the south coast. For centuries it was isolated by mountains but very prosperous because of its sugar industry. It was in this valley that I saw the first and only steam plow I ever saw. There was a steam engine at each side of the field with a drum under the boiler. The plow was pulled back and forth by the cables. It was a gang of three plows, or rather six; three headed each way—three riding and three plowing.

Just within the past year they have built an

automobile road in from Sancti Spiritus, some forty-five miles. The hospital is about eleven miles of real mountain road, up to the very top; a place called Topes de Collante. The building is both enormous and magnificent. The guide said he had heard it would cost eighteen million. A college professor who was along, said he thought four or five million. My guess is more, rather than less, than the eighteen million. I didn't get the dimensions but it is eight stories high and all equipment is of the very most modern. It has different rooms for the paying patients and the charity cases. If I remember correctly, the charity patients are all placed four in a room. The hospital will accommodate four thousand patients all told. It will begin receiving patients in March of this year, 1954. This hospital was begun when Batista was president before. The following administration abandoned it; and now Batista, in power again, is carrying it to completion.

I said to the guide, "The best President Cuba ever had, Estrada Palma, was thrown out like a dog. Machado, who built the National highway and the Capitol was thrown out by this same Batista. Now what will the Cubans do to Batista who has done more for roads, schools and hospitals than all the rest put together?" He shrugged his shoulders and said, "Sabe Dios" (God only knows).

Next day, we reached Havana and checked in our car. We had traveled 3,188 kilometers, almost exactly 2,000 miles in just two weeks, and had probably seen more of Cuba in that time than anyone else in all history, in the same length of time.

That afternoon, we visited the Capitol, far from the largest but probably the finest in the world. It is built largely of Italian marble and the woodwork is hand-carved mahogany, and there is a big diamond in the center of the floor. The guide told us that all roads and railroads in Cuba start with that point as the zero station. I had heard before that the highway started there, but as for the railroads, some of them were built more than one hundred years before the Capitol and they have not changed their kilometer posts.

The next morning, January 7th, I saw the Bradys and the Perkinses off on the plane for Miami, then went out to Candler College. I have two interests

there. First, it is a Methodist School and, second, Rev. Bardwell, the man who has built it up and been president for some forty years, was an intimate friend of mine in Guantanamo away back in 1905-06.

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In 1907, he was called to be President. At that time it was just a small men's school in down-town Havana. Cubans don't believe in co-education. He went far out in the country and bought land enough for both buildings and athletic fields, and promptly began a building campaign. They now have over a thousand students and, in addition, he built a girls' school, Buena Vista, just across the street and it has over five hundred. He has been completely blind for about twenty years, but still carried on as president till a couple of years ago. Out of gratitude for his work, the Methodist Church has built him a home, a duplicate of the one he occupied for so many years as president and he lives there on the campus. I had a very nice visit with him in January, 1954.

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Next I went by bus to Matanzas to visit an Evangelical school which is supported jointly by the Protestant Churches working in Cuba. It is for the purpose of educating native preachers to carry on the Evangelization of the Island, and is doing a great work.

Next I went to Jaguey Grande to visit the Zapata Swamp, the scene of my experiences covered in Chapter 17. Before starting on this trip I wrote a letter to the Administrator of the Australia Sugar Mill, telling him I worked on the swamp survey and would like to visit the place again. In due time I got a letter from him, telling me there is now a railroad across the swamp, and inviting me to come at my convenience. His name is Antonio Zubillaga, Jr. On my arrival he treated me quite royally and sent his assistant manager, in their motorcar, to take me across the swamp.

I have been railroading for almost fifty years but still learned something on that trip. It is the first submarine railroad I ever traveled on. I always thought that a broken rail must either be replaced or drilled and new fish plates put on to splice it. Not so. These rails are light rails, not over 30 or 40 pound rails. Breaks are frequent. When a rail breaks they run a wrecking bar between the two broken ends

and pry them far enough apart to get a bolt through, then a pair of fish plates are bolted on with just the one bolt and the train goes merrily on its way.

The railroad across the swamp and the absence of crocodiles was all the difference I could see in the swamp. With the railroad, the hunters had better access to the swamp and have killed the crocodiles off for their hides.

The Bahia de Cochina (Bay of Pigs) is one of the few deep water bays on the south coast. The owner of the, then new sugar mill, Australia, built the railroad intending to build docks and ship the sugar from all the nearby mills from there, instead of the long haul to the few ports on the north coast. Soon after the railroad was across, he was killed in an accident. During the settlement of the estate and other complications, the price of sugar went down and the docks remain unbuilt. The railroad was built on what engineers call cribbing. Logs laid lengthwise with shorter timbers crosswise and more logs lengthwise. Once the trains could cross, they hauled dirt and rocks in and built it up to three feet above water. It has now been in operation for almost forty years and has never been maintained in the usual sense of the word. It has sunk until it is all under water across the swamp. There is a lot of timber on the coastal ridge and it is used to haul out logs, cross ties, and charcoal and to supply the workers down there.

The locomotive and cars are light weight, but it operates.

While there I found three men who worked on the surveys but none who worked on my crew. One who worked with me had died within the year.

Next I returned to the Kinsey Clan, and we divided our time between visiting and feasting. We had another feast at Antonio Rutz's place, one with John Sundheimer, one with Mr. Schaum at the Baragua' Sugar Mill, and one with Mr. Erb, Manager of the Electric Light Plant in Ciego de Avila. We made our return flight to Miami, January 22nd, 1954.

Today, June 12, 1977, Noah K. Williams, my father, reached 98 years of age. This autobiography of his has been lying around our house for nearly 10 years, but my wife, Ethel, and I have just gotten around to reading it. From its contents, it appears that he wrote it in 1959. He includes accounts of his trip to Cuba in 1953 and one to Mexico in 1954, but nothing later. Perhaps I can add a bit.

He retired from the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation in 1951, as he stated, at the age of 72, and after 15 years of employment. Although the entire job was far below his capability and experience level, it was by far his longest single employment. In 1937, after his first year with them, he was granted the first vacation with pay that he had ever experienced. All of his previous vacations were between relatively short-time jobs that were definitely without vacation or retirement benefits. That vacation he visited us in Denver, where I, a Bureau of Reclamation Junior Engineer in my mid-twenties, was earning more than he, who had been doing responsible engineering work for 1/3 of a century.

Apparently much of the above gap between 1954 and 1959 was used in writing this book. After writing it, his granddaughter, Susie Williams, who was a high-school girl typed part of it. As that was a slow process, he went to school to learn typing—in his late 70's—and typed it himself. He worked long and hard on this book, referring to such diary notes as he had salvaged from the 1928 hurricane.

He and Mrs. Kinsey—known by many as Pop and Mamita (pronounced Måmeetå)—were married in 1941, shortly before Pearl Harbor. He was 62, and she 65 when they were married, but they lived to celebrate their silver wedding anniversary - the second one for each of them. Actually, to my knowledge, we were acquainted with the Kinseys by 1914 (before I was 4), which in their case, continued until her death in November 1967. (Mr. Kinsey was killed in a logging accident, in Cuba, during the Depression). Many Americans in Cuba, shortly after the turn-of-the-century, became well acquainted with each other.

When they retired, in 1951, they moved to Ft. Pierce, Florida, to be near my brother, Kenneth, who operated a dairy there; and fairly close to her two