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REPORT

ON THE

ST. NAZAIRE TRANSPORT PROJECT OF THE

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

JANUARY 17 to JUNE 4, 1947

Roger W. Craven

Paris

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PROLOGUE

I now set out to write an account of the St. Nazaire transport project from January 17 to June 5, 1947 which was the period when the service consisted of one truck (No. 13, the big "cab-over-engine") and two men. As a general framework I will take things up in chronological order suggested by the few notes I kept as a daily record of the truck, and for the rest I write from a still vivid memory of those interesting and generally happy months.

While the transport project was small and hence seems hardly worth writing about, yet I make this record in the hope that at least some parts of it will be of interest and might serve as background information on the community center program now in process of development at St. Nazaire. The story is going to be a rambling one, as was indeed the actual experience itself for it lasted for many weeks filled with activity, adventure, cold and hot weather, mud, good and bad fortune, discouragement and much gratification

PARIS TO ST. NAZAIRE

On January 17 after several days preparing the truck and equipment in the garage at Louveciennes, Louis Neumann and I set out for St. Nazaire. Weather was mild. The first part of the trip was un-eventful other than a brief visit to the Cathedral at Chartres where on all of my trips through that region I always take a few minutes to stop at the Cathedral and gaze at its massive towers, walk into the interior, enjoy the visual symphony which is composed by the lofty and graceful Gothic arches, columns, vaulted roof and exquisite

colored glass windows.

One of the striking aspects of the Cathedral is the view of it from a long distance out of town. The high towers can be seen clearly from a distance of more than sixteen miles and they appear to arise alone out of the plain, for the town itself is not high and it is hardly noticed until one is almost entering it. One can imagine what an inspiring sight this must have been as pilgrims and travelers throughout the centuries have journeyed these roads to worship in this great Temple, centre for the renewal of faith, symbol of permanence and stability in a world which so sorely needed these things.

Because of warning about road under repair along the Le Mans route, we went by way of Tours. Beset by thick fog during the last several hours of driving, we arrived at Angers at about ten o'clock in the evening. We found a secluded dark street near the edge of town, parked the truck, opened up our cots and sleeping bags, and had a good night's sleep. Next morning we unloaded a small quantity of furniture that we had brought from Paris, then set out again, went to Chazé not very far away where we picked up ~~of~~ all the household furniture of Monsieur Nicolas, who was moving back to Montoir, near St. Nazaire. Ordinarily we never took demenagements so far away as Angers, but in this case the family was lucky, being able to take advantage of our trip from Paris to effect this demenagement.

We arrived at Montoir in the evening, unloaded the furniture. Then the truck would not start; the battery appeared to be dead. We slept in the truck again, right there. Throughout the day the

weather had been getting colder and by this time it was quite crisp and windy. So our night's sleep was slightly on the shivery side. Next morning we hailed a passing truck, asked help to start ours. After being towed a few yards the engine showed signs of life, Louis tried the starter and it worked, has worked perfectly ever since. We do not know to this day what had ailed the battery. On to Savine we drove up to Barraque No. 237 and spent the rest of the day getting established and resting. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ It was Sunday.

URGENT DEMAND

Monday morning we went out on our first regular *déménagement* together. Louis was regular driver, but I usually went along too, to help out. We went to La Roche Bernard where we moved the family Hascouët, consisting of the widowed mother, a son now off in military service, and two grown daughters. The mother, an invalid, was living alone in La Roche Bernard ~~with one daughter~~, while the ~~other~~ daughters ^{were} breadwinners for the family, ~~was~~ working ~~and~~ in St. Nazaire and could ^{their mother} visit ~~her family~~ only on week ends, and then at great inconvenience. This was a *déménagement* that I had arranged with Mademoiselle Lahaye by correspondence before I left Paris. Mlle. Lahaye had said that this was the most urgent demand she had received, and recommended that since the family was very poor, we do the job free if possible. She had said that the mother was "très gravement malade et il y a nécessité absolue à ce qu'elle se rapproche de ses enfants, obligées de travailler dans notre région." We were happy to do the transport free of charge, and also happy to see the family united again and established in their new home, a requisitioned house not far from St. Nazaire. They were very appreciative.

few

The next ~~three~~ days there were no trips; we were busy with other things,- finishing getting the house in order; Louis spent a good deal of time repairing the cooling system of the truck; I had to see about the question of obtaining a larger barraque to accommodate a larger group, when our transport crew would be supplemented by Harry and Pat Burks and Babs Parker. Saturday January 25 we made a small demenagement from Pornic. Sunday Louis and I went on the bus to Le Croisic and then across the harbor to Pen Bron. I wanted to renew relationships after several months absence, and to see what were the likely transport needs if any. There would be some later.

ICE IN THE FUEL LINE

January 27 Louis went alone on a demenagement from Prinquiau near Savenay, while I was busy seeing people in St. Nazaire. The cold wave that had been threatening for several days was in full glory by this time,- weather far below freezing. Shortly after leaving Prinquiau for the return trip, the truck stopped,- trouble in the fuel line. Louis worked on it for a long time; he figured and rightly, that water in the fuel system (from poor gas) had frozen. But out on the open road like that, in such cold and wind, (It was the coldest day of the winter, and ~~that~~ during the worst cold wave in western Europe in fifty years.) was no place to undertake such a repair job. Monsieur Faure and his wife stayed with the loaded truck; Louis hitch-hiked back to Savine to look for me, and at just the time when I was starting to prepare a supper, the two of us set out, without meal, to find someone to tow us. We found a truck driver in St. Nazaire, provided him with gas plus a thousand francs, and set out, about nine

oclock, to fetch the stricken truck. Monsieur and Madame Faure, thoroughly chilled after more than a six-hour wait in the truck, went back to Pringuiau for the night and Truck No. 13 was towed back to our garage at Certé. It was a cold ride for us all, punctuated several times by the tow-rope's breaking. Back at the garage, Louis, feeling much relieved after quite a harrowing experience, exclaimed, "My Boy! I feel swell! It's like hitting yourself on the head with a hammer,- it feels so good when you stop!" We went back to the house together to start once more making a fire in the stove to cook our supper. It was eleven oclock.

The next two days were spent taking the fuel system apart to clean it, rid it of all accumulated water and rust. Next day we completed the transport job by going on to Pornichet for unloading.

THE SIMPLE LIFE

Life was rugged during this three-week cold spell. Our frail barraque No. 237 was hardly a comfortable lodging under such circumstances. The icy wind coming across the treeless swamp found easy access to our interior, through holes and cracks between panels of floor, ceiling, walls, and under window frames. Window curtains would sway, the candle flames would flicker. Each morning there was a thick layer of ice on the water buckets in the kitchen. At meal times we moved the table as near as possible to the tiny wood-burning stove whose benign but limited influence could be felt only to a distance of about two feet. At night we went to bed immediately after doing dishes. There was no other way to keep warm. We were very glad to wear mittens while carrying our water buckets from the house half mile away, our nearest water supply. We did not want to use the well nearer by, whose water had ~~h~~ probably been responsible for the bothersome diarrhea that had plagued the Quaker Transport team last November. ~~One thing was~~

"IL N'Y A PLUS GRAND CHOSE"

On January 31 we went again to La Roche Bernard. There was deep snow on the ground in all the region of La Roche, and more than once we were glad that the truck was provided with six-wheel drive when needed. There was nothing particularly remarkable about this deménagement other than the extreme volubility of Madame, a very short, plump little number, hopping about cackling like a confused hen.

This déménagement also provided one of the more flagrant examples of that propensity among people who are moving, ~~to~~ not to tell in advance all the things they have to load, and then later when the loading is presumable almost finished, thinking of all kinds of things that they have just decided to send. The annoyance to the loaders is obvious, for a good loading job requires some planning, and knowing from the beginning just what things are to go. In this case the "afterthoughts" consisted of a huge clothes cabinet, a lot of chairs, some tables, boxes and many sacs of potatoes. Forever after that we were more careful to ask explicitly at the beginning of every deménagement, "May I see first of all everything that you have to load? Are you sure there is nothing else?" "Oh il n'y a plus grand chose, seulement quelques bricoles" was the reply. At this point we would insist on actually going to the attic or barn or wood shed to see just what those "few" little things consisted of. Likely as not it would mean far more than had been expected, - a few "bouts de bois" would turn out to be half a cord of fire wood, and a couple of miscellaneous objects would be a bulky work bench, a pile of garden tools, wheel barrow minus wheel, five old bicycle frames and a rabbit cage.

MAL LOGES

February 6 we went to Herbignac where we loaded the furniture for Madame Legal, a widow, and her two children. The cold wave was about over by this time and while we were appreciative of the virtues of long wool underwear, still it was easy to stay reasonably warm as long as one was active. On February 8 we moved the Menard family who had been ~~king~~ living in an old shed built against the north wall of an old chapel. This was one of the worst lodgings I had seen a sinistre family living in. Having a dirt floor was not unusual, but being located in a place where it was effectively hidden from sunlight during those long months of fall ~~winter~~ and winter, it became thoroughly wet and musty, and stayed that way. Furniture became un-glued, wooden chair and table legs rotted. It was an unhealthy place, particularly for the little girl, and the family was especially glad to move into a barraque in St. Nazaire that was at least dry.

February 10 we went on a double *déménagement*, - picked up about half a truckload of furniture at Vertou, beyond Nantes, and then filled the rest of truck and trailer at St. Etienne de Montluc. February 12 we went to Missillac and got five stères of wood (five cubic meters) which we delivered at the "Foyer des Vieux" (Old folks club) which had recently been opened at Pornichet under the auspices of Entr'Aide Française. We had had a long and pleasant relationship with Entr'Aide Française for much of ~~the~~ the past year, - favors often being extended in both directions. The place where we got the wood was interesting, - it was a forest on the estate of the Countess of Montagu. A small creek was dammed up, this forming a lake of some size, and a beautiful setting for the picturesque Château situated on its banks.

WE TOO WANT A NEW BARRAQUE

During all these weeks I had been spending a good deal of time negotiating for the new barraque that we wanted to move into. Charlie Read had asked me to try to get the Ministry of Reconstruction to assign us a larger barraque suitable not only for housing the transport team and the folks who were to set up the proposed "Foyer" at St. Nazaire (Harry and Pat Burks and Babs Parker) but also to provide room temporarily for some community activities. The barraque we were purchasing in Switzerland would not arrive for some months yet. The Ministry of Reconstruction was as obliging as could be, but yet a good deal of time was required to see to such details as the most suitable barraque, reporting that the windows were not yet in, waiting for things to be done, seeing to it that the door knobs and locks were in order, waiting for the painting to be finished, walking two miles to the post office to telephone Paris or to telegraph if the phone was not working. There were delays in the new barraque's being ready for us, delays which were paralleled in Paris as Harry and Pat found more and more things to do before leaving. We had expected them to come February 1, and it was already the middle of the month. And furthermore, Louis and I were getting tired of doing all our own cooking. After all, there are limits to the varieties of stew that one can make.

February 14 we went on one of our longest trips so far, - to Dangan near Muzillac, and to Péaule. The family had some of their belongings stored in both places. We brought them all to a requisitioned house in Pornichet. Most of the houses in Pornichet

and La Baule have been requisitioned by the Government for use by St. Nazaire sinistres. They are eight to twelve miles from St. Nazaire but commuting bus and train service make them not a bad place for St. Nazaire workers to live. La Baule being a seaside resort, it is more beautiful than St. Nazaire will ever be in the foreseeable future. The people most unhappy in the whole deal are the proprietors who are prevented from catering to the more lucrative summer tourist trade, and instead must accept the fixed low rent of the sinistre tenants.

WE DEMENAGE OURSELVES

February 18 Louis went alone on a demenagement from Suce, near Nantes, and from Bouvron, while I spent the day doing various errands around town. The next day was a big day,- the new barraque, a two-family dwelling, was finally ready for us, and we moved in. Of course there was no light, no water, and cold breezes still blew through the house. But yet it was a little more comfortable than old 237. We felt progress was being made and were prompt to Phone to Harry and Pat in Paris, "We have moved, so come on down when you can." Incidentally, Louis and I were amused at the ways in which our own demenagement resembled many others that we had made for other people,- down to the last item of throwing the fire wood in the truck. The journey was about one hundred yards. Next day we spent getting settled, stuffing newspaper into cracks in the wall, cutting fire wood, and so on.

At three oclock in the morning of February 21 we had a visit,- Gordon Coffin and John Ward arrived from Paris in Gordon's

truck. It was a gay occasion as Louis and I ~~scampered~~ squirmed ~~xxx~~ out of our sleeping sacks and scampered to the door to welcome our guests, the first visitors we had had. We made a fire in the stove; John and Gordon ate and ate ~~and~~ the snacks we hastily assembled, - dates (bought on the French market), bread and peanut butter. And we eagerly listened to all the latest news from Paris. A few hours of sleep and at nine o'clock we unloaded the part of the truckload that was for us, - mostly furniture and equipment for the foyet, but also including a supply of food.

Then Gordon and Louis and I went to Pen Bron to deliver the load of X-ray equipment brought from Paris, - sent by some French organization for combatting tuberculosis. At Pen Bron the "bonnes soeurs" gave us the usual sumptuous meal. Our enjoyment of meals at Pen Bron and Varades was ~~always~~ so great that some of us questioned whether we were doing hauling jobs for the hospital just to get the meals. But considering everything, we felt that the importance and urgency of the transports were enough to put our too-sensitive consciences at ease. The meals were simply the "soeurs' " way of saying thank you for a job done, just as the many concert tours that some of us had made and of which Gordon and I were to make several more later, were our way of saying "You are welcome. We enjoyed doing it." More about that later, - the concerts I mean.

Next day February 22 Gordon set out for Paris (John had left earlier, hitch-hiking on vacation.) while Louis and I went to déménage the Legoff family near Pont Chateau, and the next several trips after that took us to Savenay, Mantes, Combree and Chateaubriant, Pont Chateau, Penestin, La Baule (a family of six

children and we did the job free.) Redon, Crossac, and again Savenay. We were just about able to keep up with the more urgent demands for transport, - the cold winter had delayed construction more than had been anticipated, so barraques were not being assigned very rapidly. We were always in a position to do some choosing however, and we accepted only those requests that were relatively the most important, - the poorest families, those with ~~kkkm~~ the most children or dependent old people etc. The last two of these trips Louis took alone, - I had taken a night train to Paris on March 6, and stayed there through the tenth. There had accumulated a number of matters on both the Paris and St. Nazaire ends, that made direct conversations necessary.

THE BURKS FINALLY ARRIVE AT ST. NAZAIRE

My trip to Paris was fortunately timed for I was ready to come back just when Harry and ~~Pat~~ Pat were to drive down to St. Nazaire in their jeep. We were to set out Tuesday morning, the 11th, but as usual the last minute loading of the trailer took longer than expected, so we did not get off until after noon. ~~Byxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Conversation was lively and got off to a good start as two former C.P.S. men compared notes. Harry had fought forest fires in Montana, as a parachutist, while I had had a very happy nine months in the mountains of Oregon. Mutual acquaintances, anecdotes, wild bear stories, adventures, - There was plenty to talk over, and we got pretty well acquainted in the mean while.

By evening we still had a long way to go, so to avoid having to drive too late we stopped at Varades to spend the night, or the latter half of it. The hospital, for which we had done so many transports, turned out to be a very convenient hostel for this little troupe of travelers. Wednesday morning we arrived at Savine. Thursday morning Harry and Louis set out in the truck for Paris to get a load of furniture and supplies for the "foyer". On the 18th Harry came back in the truck, this time being driven not by Louis, but by Gordon Coffin, veteran of the project last fall. Doctor's orders to Louis were that he rest and that he particularly avoid lifting heavy objects. On a déménagement three weeks before, he had strained himself while we were carrying a kitchen stove down a flight of stairs, and doctor said a bit of caution at this point might avoid a lot of trouble.

Many details have already been omitted from this record and I will suggest some of the things that had filled our time during the days and hours not filled with demenagements. Besides the routine maintenance of the truck, Louis did various repair jobs. Many hours at the shipyards arranging for the demenagements took a good deal of my time, and then there was always the wood cutting, marketing and cooking in which we both shared. Balm weather was yet to arrive, so spare time at the baraque in the evening usually meant stoking the fire and sitting pretty close to it for reading and writing, by the light of two kerosene lanterns. We had succeeded in buying some just as our supply of candles was exhausted.

AN ACCORDION ENTERS OUR LIVES

March 19 Gordon and Harry rested, and for Gordon that meant playing my adccordion. I had bought it^{second hand} in Switzerland last January but so far had not pursued my intention of learning to play it. But Gordon was drawn to it as a small boy to the cookie jar. He is a good piano player. Now in this instrument he had found a passtime that was to give him and all of us many hours of pleasure.

WEDDING PICTURE, ~~1907~~ 1907

Next day Gordon and I took a load of furniture from Le Croisic to Pen Bron Sanatorium, then Saturday we did a demenagement for an aged couple in Campbon. This trip was a rather memorable one for the two reasons of the difficulties we encountered and the incidental fun due to the personalities of Monsieur and Madame Bruno. The difficulties started off with a flat tire first thing in the morning, then M. Bruno's son did not meet his rendez-vous to help us with the loading. (We learned later that my message to him had not been relayed to him.) . The loading job was a particularly long one since most of the furniture was up in the "grenier" on the second floor, and ~~ka~~ had to be carried down a flight of precarious steps outside the rear of the building, then all the way around the house to the road. In this we were consoled by the happiness of the two old folks at being able to leave such a miserable dwelling place,- an attic with ~~an~~ only one tiny sky-light in the leaky roof for light. A heavy shower of rain did not disappoint us much for we had long since become resigned to rainy weather during a Brittany winter, and we regarded rain as normal.

As the truck loading neared completion our spirits gradually lightened and, as so often happened, we became well enough acquainted with our hosts to be able to joke with them. Le vieux Bruno, although well along in his seventies and trembling noticeably, was still pretty solid and he was proud of the amount of work he could do. And he did plenty in loading the truck. I commended him on his strength and his chest swelled as well as his arm as I admiringly felt his muscle. People seven years old and seventy years old are about the same. At the ages in between they are the same too, only more sophisticated.

I picked up an old dusty gaudily-framed wedding picture, exclaimed how proud and good-looking were the couple. "A quelle date, ~~quand~~ ça?" I inquired. "dix neuf cent sept" he replied with emphasis and precision. That gave Madame, who was now a toothless and stooped old ~~woman~~ woman, an opening for another one of her tirades, "Quarante ans que j'ai vécu avec cet homme-là!" in a tone implying that it had been a long and tough ordeal. I stood by the old fellow wincing at this jibe, but who was by this time becoming my very good friend, and I persuaded the old lady to admit that although it was forty years, it was not the awful "épreuve" she had insinuated, and that she was really lucky to have had such a good husband all that time. Monsieur Bruno and I were better friends than ever by this time, and often a mere glance between us would suffice to get a laugh.

Whatever damage I had done to the feelings of Madame by my rather direct tactics was quite adequately repaired later as we were unloading the truck at St. Nazaire in the house of their married son. I had again picked up the wedding picture and was

comparing looks of the beautiful bride with those of an attractive granddaughter lying in a crib near by. "Elle, plus $\&$ belle que moi " Madame ventured inquiringly. (She, prettier than I am"). I paused, looked thoughtfully again at the picture and the baby, then realizing that the old lady was right, I replied, "Mais quand-mêmes, peut-être pas plus gentille que vous." (Even so, perhaps she is no nicer than you.") Madame glowed with contentment, or something.

OPERATING SCHEDULE

From this point on, Gordon took most of his déménagements alone. Specializing on truck driving and not spending any time on household work as Louis had done, permitted him to speed up the schedule to four regular trips a week instead of three. This schedule of four trips per week, one day off and one day for truck maintenance had operated quite successfully last fall when the transport team consisted of three trucks and four men. Trucks remained in good repair throughout, and men avoided excessive fatigue.

During the next few weeks I spent a good deal of my time helping Harry and Pat and Babs get acquainted with their new field of operations,- meeting various people in the area with whom they were to have dealings and who could give advice. This kind of thing properly belongs in the record of the "foyer" but the transport and "Foyer" projects dove-tailed in so many respects that they could not always be kept too distinctly apart. In any case I spent an

increasing amount of time helping out with the Foyer while Gordon was busy moving families from Redon Arzal, Bouguenais, St. Etienne, St. Dolay, Pontchateau, St. Mars la Jaille, Séverac, St. Jacut, Le Gavre, and St. Gildas. He worked one Sunday moving two families from St. Nazaire to the housing settlement at Ker Ledé, just outside. These families were being evicted, - their cabins were to be torn down two days later to make way for a new street.

A MARGIN FOR EMERGENCIES

The week beginning April 14 was a busy one for transport. We had already scheduled demenagements from St. Gildas, La Remaudiere, Béganne and Quilly so our normal week was already filled up. But we received two "emergency calls, and I took both these trips on days otherwise reserved for Gordon's day off, and for truck maintenance. One was a deménagement from Pornichet, - not very far away, but Mademoiselle Lahaye had told me it was a needy case, - the family had had hard luck with health recently, one child had been killed in an accident two months before, and the family was living in a windowless basement. Because of these circumstances, the authorities had assigned a barraque to this family which ordinarily would have had to wait for many months yet. So it gave me particular satisfaction to move this family, bag and baggage, to their new (and sunny) home almost before they had a chance to think about it, much less worry about how they were going to do it.

The second urgent call was a request from "Ma Mère Supérieure" at Pen Bron Sanatorium, that we carry a load of lumber and building supplies from a mill in Nantes. There was no other way for them to

be delivered before a delay of weeks, and the tuberculosis Sanitorium was anxious to have its isolation wards set up so as to give better treatment to its sick youngsters.

So that made six trips, six days in succession, and fortunately there was no trouble with the truck and the heavy schedule went off without a hitch. This was not the only week that called for a rather long steady pull, for more were to come later. But one of the benefits of the four-trip-per-week schedule as described above was that it made possible under emergencies, some of those extra trips which were so much appreciated. There has sometimes been a tendency while running a transport program such as this, to be frantic and operate on an "emergency basis all the time. But we had learned last year that this results eventually in poor truck maintenance, over-tired men, a sum total of less work done, and an absence of any reserve for real emergencies.

Monday April 19 Gordon moved the Landrain family from Questembert, - a family with four small children. On Wednesday Gordon moved a family from Surzur. That was the kind of day that leaves a truck driver none too happy. Monsieur and his brother (who had gone along to help) drank too much wine during the day and by the end of the day both Frenchmen were so drunk that they were totally ineffective in helping Gordon unload the truck. Monsieur himself fell flat on his face as he clumsily tried to climb down off the truck. The first reaction of the truck driver in an instance like this is one of disgust, disappointment that gratitude is expressed in no better way than by getting drunk. But we have had

similar experiences a few times before during the past year, admitting of some perspective on this kind of thing. Monsieur is a sinistre, like all the rest; he has a wife and two ~~sons~~ children aged nine and five years. We did help a family that needed help and they are now happier in their new home. And that is essentially why we came to St. Nazaire.

HOSPITAL CONCERT

On April 24 in the afternoon Gordon and I both ~~xxxx~~ went to Varades, - a trip of about ninety miles, where we spent the night. This enabled us to have the truck ready for loading first thing in the morning, and the long trip to Pen Bron and then the return to St. Nazaire is in itself enough of a day's work. Gordon and I had both come prepared on this trip, for a visit with the children. There were still about a hundred of them lying on their beds, held in frames, clutched in plaster casts. They were being treated for tuberculosis of the bone. In a few more weeks they were all to be transferred to Pen Bron where they really belonged. In saying that we had come prepared, I mean that he had brought my accordion and I had brought my recorder.

While the hospital employees were loading our truck (quite a luxury for us) Gordon and I went on a little concert tour of the hospital, visiting each ward, pausing by each bed as we made the white walls ring with music. As one can imagine, the children were fascinated by the accordion and the dexterity of Gordon's fingers as he called forth an endless stream of melodies and chords.

My recorder was quite drowned out by the louder instrument but I kept on anyway, contributing whatever the thing had to offer. Anyway my turn came later as I yielded to the invitation (?!) to sing, solo. Such children lying flat on their backs for weeks and months are so bored that they will accept anything offered as musical entertainment. I sang Clementine, with Gordon accompanying at the accordion. The fact of my having given a brief résumé in French beforehand, and depicting with gestures as I sang, some of the more dramatic moments in the life of the "miner, a forty-niner", helped the audience to follow generally what was going on. And they kept on following the tune themselves some time after Gordon and I had left the room. Arriving at Pen Bron late in the afternoon, we had time to make another musical tour there.

FAMILY OF TWELVE

Next day, April 26 Gordon moved a family from Beganne into one of the Savine houses not far from our own barraque. There were ten children in the family, and the number of children who came regularly to the "Foyer des Amis" to play, took a sudden increase. Sunday April 27 I moved two families from Savenay, - two separate trips. Because of another special (and late) request from Pen Bron, after our w regular week was k already filled up, I advanced the date of these two déménagements to Sunday so as to leave Monday free for another trip for the Hospital.

Gordon took that trip alone, - carried six tons of floor tile from Nantes to Pen Bron. Tilers were ready to lay them right away, so as to make available for use some more rooms that

had been ruined during the war. Pen Bron had been evacuated in May 1942 after increasing threats of bombing raids, and for the rest of the war it was used by the Germans to lodge troops and especially several thousand prisoners and slaves engaged in building Atlantic Wall fortifications. This use was hard on the hospital buildings and resultant damage amounted to many thousands of dollars worth. Wednesday was another Varades to Pen Bron trip, and Friday Gordon moved a family from St. Dolay to Savine. There were three more children to play in the sand box that Harry had made, to ride on the giant ^{see-saw} under-slung ~~xxxxxx~~ that I had built.

WE FILL UP THE "MARGIN FOR EMERGENCIES"

Saturday and Sunday there were no trips, but beginning on Monday May 5 the truck rolled for nine consecutive days, - the longest unbroken stretch we had. A combination of circumstances beyond our control brought this about, - we certainly did not choose to have it thus, but good fortune with the truck still continued (except for increasing tire trouble) and we were able to carry through the heavy schedule all right.

We had been told by the Paris office that a photographer from "Life" magazine was coming down to spend three days with us, and he was to get a story on our transport work, particularly to get some newsworthy pictures of a family in various stages of demenagement. So, while some trips were already promised for this week, I booked three on consecutive days so that we would be ready to accommodate the "Life" photographer on any day or days that he chose. In looking over the current

requests I picked three that looked particularly interesting, - families were especially poorly lodged, and there were several children in each. At the same time I promised three more trips for ~~the~~ Pen Bron Sanatorium, which was now coming down the home stretch of its one-year-long moving process. They were bringing one hundred and twenty-five more children from Varades in the train, and all their beds and other equipment had to come simultaneously. It was another emergency.

GRANDMOTHERS ALWAYS RIDE UP FRONT WITH ME

Gordon started off the long pull by working in the Garage all day Sunday, May 4, making new supports to hold the canvas tarpaulin on the truck. He made the top more even, and higher, so we could carry bigger loads. Then ~~on~~ Monday I went alone to Surzur to move the Cristel family, - a man and his wife and three children. Monsieur had prepared for moving more thoroughly than most families do, and the entire loading took only half an hour. That saved lots of time for me and I appreciated that, since Surzur is one of the farthest tows to which we went for déménagements.

When we drove back to St. Nazaire Grandmother came along too, to spend a few days with her children in their new home. Grandmothers always ride with me up front in the cab, while the rest of the family is back with the furniture. She was quite a sight as she sat up there, waving good bye to all the neighbors as we went by. She was big, plump, rosy-faced, wearing black dress and white "coiffe" (the style of head-dress for elderly ladies in

Brittany) sitting so high up in the cab-over-engine of the six-wheel, six-ton truck. She was thrilled at the ride. I was pleased that we had made such good time, as we pulled in to the housing project at Ker Lédé much earlier than I had expected.

"LIFE" GOES ON A DEMENAGEMENT

On Tuesday Gordon went to Bouvron to move M. Donatien Richard with his wife and five children. This was the first of the three trips I had arranged especially for the "Life" Photographer. But he did not arrive till evening, so Gordon simply did the job alone.

That evening Harry, Pat and I went to La Baule where we met and had supper in a hotel with Mr. Wild, the man who was to accompany us on a demenagement and record the story in pictures. Mr. Wild was a very quiet, pleasant young man, an Englishman, in his middle thirties. We talked with him for quite a while at supper table, giving him all the information he seemed interested to hear about St. Nazaire, its destruction in the allied bombing raids of February 1943, the flight of the people, and the part that Quaker Transport has played in helping many of them to settle once more in St. Nazaire as new temporary houses are being built by the French government. We made a rendez-vous for the following morning at seven-thirty, at our baraque in Savine.

The family this time was Monsieur Louis Bolloré with his wife and five children all "tres mal loges" in one room in a house just outside Couëron, near Nantes. We had agreed to go fetch a few pieces of furniture in Nantes for one of our Savine neighbors, so while Gordon went to Nantes for that, Mr. Wild and his chauffeur and

I went in their car direct to Couéron. There we found Monsieur's family, and Mr. Wild began taking pictures ~~of~~ to show the "before" condition of things. We explained to Monsieur the reason for this visit of the photographer, stating quite frankly that it was hoped to make a magazine article. Mondieur was entirely agreeable, as was the rest of the family, and they certainly did their best to cooperate throughout the whole time. At one point Madame cooperated slightly too much, I thought, for as soon as she saw that pictures were to be taken she promptly soaked little junior's curly hair with water and gave it a vigorous combing, thus eliminating a rather picturesque mop of thick curls, and producing in its place a pasted-down mat of wet wool. But mothers do that kind of thing.

Mr. Wild took pictures of the family of seven people all standing in the one small room that had been their home; he took pictures of furniture being carried out the door, and being lined up along the fence. The furniture shown was far too much to have gone into one small room. Much of it had been stored in an out-building. All of this family's furniture had been burned during the bombing, and all that he had now was what he had accumulated since that time, from various sources. At about eleven oclock Gordon arrived with the truck, having come from Nantes. Then there was more picture taking both posed and "candid" of the loading of the truck, saying good bye to the neighbors, and the final departure. At St. Nazaire arriving at the barraque there were pictures of the unloading, passing furniture through the windows, and of Gordon and me saying good bye to the family as we stood before the front door.

On the following morning more pictures were taken showing the furniture all in place and the family all happily settled in their new home.

We considered it fortunate that things had turned out so well on this demenagement. The weather was perfect; the family was interesting and pleasant; there was no truck trouble. The situation contained at least as many suitable factors for photography as any other one demenagement we ever had. A few of the "typical" things were missing, such as a good-natured old father-in-law, and there were no dogs or cats or chickens to liven up the scene. But in general we were all pleased at the way things went. Mr. Wild thought that "Life" wanted to use the pictures in an issue near the end of May, but at this writing (June 24) I do not know if the article has appeared or if it ever will. Mr. Wild had taken about ninety pictures in all. There was one more specially planned demenagement for Thursday, that Mr. Wild could have gone on, but he was so content with the shots he had taken already that he thought further pictures not necessary. So after a brief visit and a cup of coffee at our barraque, he and his chauffeur set out for Paris.

ORPHAN OF ALCOHOL

So Gordon took Thursday's trip alone, - to Genrouet, near Quilly. It was for the Emil Brard family, with six children, and they moved into the house just across the street from us in Savine. When Gordon drove the loaded truck up to the house in the afternoon and the unloading was started, I had occasion to be especially thankful that

And there is little Louis, smiling, affectionate, perhaps in a sense lonesome, going every day to "chez les Americains" to play, and asking for something he does not seem to get at home.

Next Day, Friday May 9, Gordon and I both went to Nantes to get six more tons of tiles for Pen Bron. We tarried as little as possible at Pen Bron for we still had another ninety-mile trip back to Varades that evening where we were to spend the night before taking another load of hospital furnishings. We had a good night's sleep, breakfast and interesting conversation with Monsieur le Curé. Again there was time for an accordion and recorder ~~music~~ serenade at Varades and we did the same at Pen Bron.

INCENDIARY BOMB

Monday May 12 Gordon moved the Le Gland family from Pont Chateau and the next day he brought the Gabriel Bant family from St. Reine de Bretagne, not very far away. Helping with the déménagement was Monsieur Bant's brother-in-law, a sixteen-year-old boy. This is his story.

In the spring of 1945 he was fourteen years old. It was two years since the devastating incendiary and bombing raids in which the allies had destroyed almost all of St. Nazaire. In 1945 some of the people had begun coming back to St. Nazaire,- there was work to do among the charred ruins, and some people found places where they could live,- parts of houses still standing. It was quiet, no bombs were falling. This fourteen year old boy was walking in some tall grass near a house, when he tripped his foot on something

and there was a sudden flash of flame. Burning chemical from hidden the ~~burning~~ incendiary bomb splashed all around, ignited his clothes, flew into his mouth, all over his face, in his eyes. Prompt action by a man who came to his rescue, kept the boy's body from being consumed. In the hospital the doctors estimated ninety-nine chances out of a hundred he would die. Almost the entire surface of his body was burned; there was a large hole in the boy's side; one ear was completely burned off. The boy lived. After many months in the hospital he was released to go out in the world again. And he is out in the world now, - with scars covering his body, - a big hollow place in his side, one ear missing; he is unable to do vigorous work because of permanent internal injuries; his eyes are red and irritated, and one of the eye balls looks as though it might fall from its socket.

I could hardly bear to look at this boy as he and I and Gordon and Monsieur Bant were working together, carrying things into the house. He can talk, this boy. We talked together a little as we carried boxes and chairs. And he must be able to think too. I wonder what he does think as he faces life at the age of sixteen in such condition as he is in. Can he ever believe in such a thing as justice. Can he ever pray, with any kind of assurance, that God will protect him? Does he ever wonder whether perhaps God projected him too much already in giving him that one percent chance to live? Can he ever develop a faith great enough to overcome even an incendiary bomb, and by which he might lead a normal happy and useful life? What is our responsibility as citizens of the country that made and delivered that bomb?

After finishing unloading Monsieur Bant's furniture, Gordon and I set out for Varades for another over-night stay, then to take another load of furnishings to Pen Bron. When we arrived at Pen Bron in the afternoon there rows and rows of children lying on the "chariots" (litters) along the wall. They too had come from Varades that day, by train to Le Fouliguen and from there in an Entr'Aide Française¹¹ truck. All of the children had now been transferred and there was quite a festive spirit as they all ~~felt~~ realized, - the bonnes soeurs and the children, that at last they were where they really belonged; they were back home at last. The completion of this grand home-coming in May 1947 just happened to fall on a memorable anniversary. It had been just five years since the hospital had fled its home in the face of increasing danger from allied bombing planes which came ever nearer but never struck there. But bombs falling a few hundred yards away were sufficient to justify some fear. Then further, speaking of anniversaries, it had been just one year ago that ~~three~~ three trucks of Quaker Transport, driven by Leigh Morrell, John Robbins and Reed Smith, made the long journey to Varades to bring the first three truckloads of furnishings back to Pen Bron. Now in May 1947 Varades was rid of its war-time refugees guests and could now open its doors to receive some of the many who were awaiting admission for preventive treatment of pulmonary tuberculosis, - alarmingly prevalent among children in France these days.

As to old truck No. 13, - our nine-consecutive-day stretch was now over and we were relieved and happy that things had run so smoothly during this critical time.

SHARPS AND FLATS

Gordon had a day off, - that is, he did not drive the truck. But he was pretty busy building a play house out of old scrap lumber, for the children who come to the "Foyer des Amis". The next afternoon May 17 he went alone to Larmor Baden, to the northwest of Vannes. This we considered too far for a round trip in one day with all the time for loading and unloading, so Gordon spent that night with the family of his host, Monsieur Henri Pellerin, then made the demenagement the following morning.

In the Pellerin family there were three children, of whom one, the fourteen year old son, is a cripple, permanently confined to bed. He was brought to St. Nazaire in an ambulance and because of this expense Monsieur ~~was~~ especially appreciated the very low fee (flat rate of 1500 francs, about 12 to 13 dollars) which we charged for hauling his furniture. The ambulance arrived at St. Nazaire before the truck did, and when Gordon arrived he found the crippled boy there, playing his "pipeau", which is similar to a shepherd's pipe or recorder. Now Gordon always has his recorder with him, to amuse himself in case there is a long wait somewhere. At this time the two musicians quickly discovered their mutual interest, and Gordon had occasion to show the lad how to play sharps and flats on his instrument, - something he had not known before.

NO GRAVE NO FUNERAL

On Monday May 19 we did a job for a man whose circumstances caused me to be especially interested in his case. Otherwise we would not have devoted a whole truck trip for such a small family.

The man was Monsieur Pierre Daniau, a widower, living with his ten-year-old daughter at the house of some friends of his in St. Nazaire. This was his story as reported to me by Mademoiselle Lahaye of the personnel office of the Penhoet shipyards.

M. Daniau was taken prisoner and was held captive in Germany for five years. In the mean time his wife and his little daughter Marie-Thérèse continued to live in their home in St. Nazaire. Came the allied bombing raids of February 1943 and the Daniau home, along with almost all other St. Nazaire homes, was completely destroyed. Madame Daniau and her child, along with the entire population, fled to the country or to nearby towns to stay for the rest of the war. Madame Daniau and Marie-Thérèse happened to go to the home of her parents in Beauvoir, some distance south of the Loire.

One day some months later Madame Daniau had occasion to go spend a day at Nantes. Little Marie-Thérèse, then six years old, stayed home. It was September 16, 1943 when Madame went to Nantes, - the day of the surprise mid-day bombing by American and British planes, - the raid which destroyed large parts of the city including the largest hospital (where several hundred patients were killed), the raid in which several thousand French people lost their lives. Madame Daniau had gone into a department store to do some shopping. Her body was never, - ^{found} - or what parts there were could not be identified, so she must have been very near to the point where the bomb struck. No funeral was ever held. There is no grave where Monsieur Daniau, the released prisoner in 1945, could go to lay a wreath.

Monsieur Daniau applied to us for a deménagement because he wanted to bring his furniture from Beauvoir, where it was stored, to use it in the house of his friends where he and ten-year-old Marie-Thérèse are now living. We did this transport free of charge.

The Sunday after the deménagement was to be the first communion for little Marie-Thérèse, - an event which is very important in the lives of French families, an event usually witnessed by all the child's relatives and friends. But Marie-Thérèse's grandmother was not going to be present at the communion, ~~in spite of~~ in spite of the pleadings of the little girl and of other relatives. For grandmother's spirit has been completely broken ever since that day in September 1943. She cries and loses control of herself every time she thinks of her daughter, who had been mother of Marie-Thérèse.

I had a little conversation with Monsieur Daniau, a pleasant fellow, apparently in his middle thirties. As we stood leaning against the back of the truck waiting for a few minutes before starting out, I heard him remark rather wistfully and simply on how uncertain life is, and how he has found that since all peoples are basically alike, there should be no wars, for they are wrong and bring only misery for everybody. I perceived no hatred in his voice, - this man who had suffered so much and had lost so much. He said further that the only way to live is for people to like each other, - all people, all nations. The thoughts that he expressed as we stood there together in the warm May sunshine were not startlingly new or original, for I had heard them all before. But somehow I was a bit more convinced of their truth after this experience.

ST. NAZAIRE CITY HOSPITAL

That was the last demenagement for a family that Gordon and I did, for the rest of the month was already scheduled with trips for the St. Nazaire Hospital and one more final haul for Pen Bron.

In February 1943 when practically the entire city was destroyed, of course the hospital was too. Fortunately there were no deaths because most of the patients had been transferred shortly before, and those who remained fled to the basement whose ceiling happened to resist the weight of the crumbling walls above. During the months that followed the hospital authorities worked to assemble more equipment and they eventually set up a temporary hospital in a convent in St. Gildas, about twenty-five miles from St. Nazaire. Since the end of the war, and with supplies bought from the American army and Red Cross, the hospital at St. Gildas has been equipped with considerable material, to handle several hundred patients, in medical, surgical and maternity departments.

But being in St. Gildas, the hospital was still "refugee" and still many miles distant from where it ought to be. By this time however, in the spring of 1947, the authorities had succeeded in getting other temporary quarters prepared in a former camp just outside the city of St. Nazaire. The Superintendent, Monsieur Alanet, asked me if we could help with the transport, to bring at least ~~of~~ part of the material back to the new quarters, which will serve as the St. Nazaire hospital for a good many years to come. With only one truck we could not bring everything even in a whole week, but ~~the hospital~~ Monsieur Alanet would hope to find other trucks

for the rest. With transportation still quite hard to get, and ~~the~~ even then extremely expensive, this help would, I was assured, ~~be~~ "rendre un grand service". So we agreed to do all that we could for the rest of the month. That turned out to be twelve complete trips with the truck, several of them also with trailer. Gordon and I shared the driving, he and I each taking some of the trips alone, and sometimes we both went.

ONE HOSS SHAY

Loading and unloading at St. Gildas and St. Nazaire was done by German prisoners and hospital employes, altho we did some of it. There were scores of beds, mattresses, bales of linen, hundreds of boxes of medicines, bottles, surgical equipment, coal, a three-ton transformer for the X-ray machine (That was a honey to load, - without a derrick.), tables, desks, everything imaginable. Good fortune with the truck continued to the end, except for the tires. The truck had come from Paris in the middle of January with the expectation that it would stay for six weeks. We had now been here for more than four months, rolling constantly, and without having received from Paris one ~~spark~~ spare part, nor one tire. So by this time several of the tires were thin or otherwise weakened and they punctured at the slightest provocation. Our tire experience of the last few weeks was suggestive of the "one hoss shay" that broke down all at once. I remember the day I had two punctures and one blow-out. Bang! Well that kind of thing slowed things down a bit, but we managed to keep rolling until the end, although it meant taking the two wheels off the trailer so we could use the tires on the truck. The trailer, minus wheels, we eventually carried back to Paris inside the truck.

We did one more haul for Pen Bron and then got ready to go to Paris. Gordon was due for a vacation; the truck was due for extensive maintenance and especially some tires; I was due to go to Cologne, Germany, to work in a community center for twelve months.

AU REVOIR

During the last few days at St. Nazaire I made good-bye visits to some of the people whose friendship and help had meant a great deal to us in the transport team. I went to Pen Bron on Sunday for one more visit with those forlorn sick children, mostly victims of war, neglect, abandonment, and illegitimate parents, now taking the cure for tuberculosis of the bone. I told them a story again, - my favorite story, in French, and they sang several songs. I said good-bye to the Mother Superior and the other devoted Sisters (of the Order of St. Vincent de Paul) whose consecrated lives are among the most beautiful and pure manifestations of the Christian spirit that I have ever seen.

In Le Pouliguen I said ~~good-bye~~ "auf wiedersehen" to Helmut Ellwart, German prisoner, with whom there has been an ever deepening friendship through all these months, and whose object lesson in fortitude and patience has far out-balanced for me, the few little favors I have been able to do for him. I said good bye to Leon Erard, former student in my English class at Savenay, where I taught in 1931. He is now a teacher of economics. Leon is one of the best ~~fix~~ friends I have in France. I said good bye to Monsieur Alain Rubaux, local attorney and public-spirited man about Le Pouliguen, who from the beginning has been a sort of sponsor for our work.

In the Penhoet shipyards at St. Nazaire I said good bye to Mademoiselle Esther Ducros, social worker, whose intelligent and candid advice has been an indispensable help to us throughout the year past. I said good bye to Mademoiselle Etienne Lahaye, of the personnel office, whose constant and tireless help in contacting families to move, was a key factor in the operation of the whole program. In practical effect she was herself a member of the transport team, and no other member ever showed a more devoted "Quaker Spirit" than she did. (She is a devout Catholic.) I am asking the Philadelphia office to write letters of appreciation to both Mlle Ducros and Mlle. Lahaye for the help they gave us. Actually however, it is the St. Nazaire inhabitants themselves, the ultimate beneficiaries, who are the most indebted to these kind people.

Also at St. Nazaire I said good bye to a lot of men I know who are working and living in the cold walls of the submarine base, and who have always been most cordial on my many visits there. They are German prisoners. Lastly I said good bye to Babs Parker and to Harry and Pat Burks, present staff of the "Foyer des Amis", at Savine. Knowing them, living and working with them as I have done during the past three months, has been one of the happiest aspects of the whole St. Nazaire experience. Bless 'em .

SUMMARY OF WORK DONE

Briefly summarized, the accomplishment of the transport program (one truck) during the period recounted above, amounts to this: Fifty-five families carried from the interior back to relatively permanent homes in St. Nazaire; about ten other demenagements and various miscellaneous hauls of furniture; one trip for Entr'Aide

Francaise (carrying fire-wood); ten trips for Pen Bron Sanatorium; twelve trips for St. Nazaire Hospital.

EVALUATION

With regard to the demenagements and the Pen Bron Sanatorium transports, it would be interesting here to total up everything ~~we~~ accomplished by Quaker Transport during the whole time of our operation in St. Nazaire, that is, ever since April 1946. The team was actually there for about ten and one half months of that time, and it varied in strength from seven trucks to three trucks to one truck. And in doing this I shall make a few interpretive remarks as to what our help meant to the persons receiving it.

Déménagements: We moved about 400 families. Of these, about 300 were actual repatriations, - that is we moved the people and all their furniture from the place of refuge in the interior, to a relatively permanent home in or near St. Nazaire. The other 100 were transports of furniture for families that had come back but had not been able to bring all their furniture with them, so our transport actually enabled them to be "at home." ~~xxxxxxx~~

In the spring of 1946 when we were first here, many of our déménagements were free, but as the project was carried on beginning October 1, 1946 we charged a flat rate of 1500 francs (about 12 to 13 dollars) for every demenagement regardless of distance. In view of the reduced budget of the French Mission, it was this income in fees that made possible the existence of the transport project, for it covered almost the entire expense in the field, - gas, oil, tire repair, food, laundry, miscellaneous. ~~Had not the expense of the project increased by four hundred percent in March of this year while xxxxxxx~~

While from our point of view this income was vital to the existence of the project, the cost to each family was so small as not to be a serious financial burden, and it was my impression that families we moved under this plan were just as happy (or more) as those that received free transport last year. The consideration of self-respect probably enters into the situation here. While moving by commercial truckers would have cost up to something near a whole month's salary in many cases, we did it for one third to one tenth that price. And still in the case of families certified to us as needy, we did the job free. In brief then, the St. Nazaire people were very glad indeed to have us around. I checked once more this spring with the president of the local truck drivers' union (Monsieur Plessis, in La Baule) to see whether our work was causing any difficulties to the local truck drivers in the way of competition. M. Plessis told me there had never been any complaint. Apparently they all had their hands full.

Pen Bron Sanatorium; We made in all, twenty six trips (most of them 180 miles round trip) in which we carried all of the material furnishings and equipment of this hospital from its place of refuge at Varades to its own home at Pen Bron. Sixteen of these trips were free but for the last ten we charged the price of the gasoline. I can just say that according to the whole reaction on the part of the hospital staff, I feel very gratified to have been the means of helping this institution in its vigorous effort to resume full scale its much needed work of human rehabilitation. And incidentally there are some hundreds of children who now know Americans for some things other than bombing raids.

For the St. Nazaire hospital we did about one half the whole job of transport of material from its temporary location in St. Gildas to relatively permanent quarters just outside St. Nazaire. The rest was done by commercial trucking companies. Monsieur Alanet, the Superintendent of the hospital, was very appreciative of our help saying that he would have had great difficulty in getting adequate transport from other sources at just the time we were helping. The price we asked the hospital to pay covered strictly the gasoline and seemed to the hospital to be extremely low. For a hospital that had been completely destroyed by American and British bombs, and then had had to buy from the American Army surplus material to equip a new hospital, the lift we gave was significant. As for me I was particularly glad to be able to do this transport as a gesture of help from the American people. One of the Sisters in the hospital mentioned to me her appreciation of this "geste". What does her remark imply as to her feelings about the bombing raid. I know, for I have detected that many times in my conversations with the sinistres.

TRANSITION

The transport project in its role as fore-runner of the community center program now under way at St. Nazaire is a subject which I suppose (hope?) has been recorded by the Paris office. For the purposes of this report therefore I shall simply make a few observations on the transitional function of the transport program during the past few months, as the community center was getting under way. Although the community center program is much needed and will be appreciated by the inhabitants of St. Nazaire, yet it is a good thing that the transport program was able to continue as long as it did.

during those weeks of preparation and beginnings. This ~~is~~ is so from three different points of view.

First: From our point of view the transport program during these past several months was amply justified in itself, for the one truck was able to handle a significant proportion of the transport needs as houses were being completed and assigned to families. We took all the most needy cases as far as we could determine them, that is, large families, those in which the father had to travel the farthest to get to work, dependant old people, sickness, bad living conditions. We took many others whose circumstances were relatively not strictly "needy" yet in the real sense certainly all the families we moved had suffered in the war,- after all, their houses were destroyed along with many or all their belongings, and hence worthy to be helped by services such as ours. In this regard the value of the project is about the same as it was last year: we were not doing anything critical such as relief feeding in a famine area, for instance, and St. Nazaire could get along without us, but yet the hand we lent was a big help. And further, the reputation of our work was broader than the number of immediate families we moved. I believe the intent and spirit of our work was and is becoming as well understood in St. Nazaire as in most other Service Committee projects.

Second: Considering the Ministry of Reconstruction, which has always been ready to oblige us in any way possible, I am glad that we could continue to fulfill our part of the responsibility in concrete form (i.e. transport) at a time when Quaker Service was asking more and more favors and was receiving the same. I never expect to see any other agency anywhere, government or otherwise, be more obliging than the M.R.U. was to us during the

past few months. And during a good many of those weeks the Community Center was on the receiving end only. Now it is beginning to give some, to the community, and is moving toward the point of justifying all the favors it asked.

The thought discussed in this paragraph is one which simply occurred to. It was not suggested to me from without. But it did occur to me forcefully and to Harry Burks, time and time again as our good friend Monsieur Proust (of the Ministry of Reconstruction) came to our house many times getting more details as to just what Harry needed, giving advice, and then doing all kinds of things to help us. I was glad that old Truck No. 13 was rolling.

Third: From the point of view of the inhabitants of St. Nazaire, the transport work was something that was concrete and easy to understand, during the weeks when the community center program was just getting under way with its rather vague intentions toward "recreation for young people", helping "community life" to develop and so on. The best way for a French person to grasp what was going on in our Savine baraque was to be told that the "Quakers, who have been bringing back sinistre families to St. Nazaire, are now going to start a program to help people in other ways." That made it understandable.

This point I had thought about for a long time, but it was brought to my attention most forcefully by a side remark by Mademoiselle Ducros, who, as I have mentioned above, was our most dependable advisor and "barometer". It will be remembered that at one time it was expected that the transport work would terminate in February or early March, and that the Community Center did not really get started until later than that. It was late in May when I happened to be talking with Mlle. Ducros about the transport's

having continued longer than was earlier intended. "I tell you", she said directly, "At the beginning I was very much worried about the local reaction to the community center". And then a few moments later, "I am convinced that without the transport work, the "foyer" would not have succeeded." I am not certain whether this second remark referred to the earlier transport work, or to the job being done currently or very recently. But whichever she meant, the point is clear that the St. Nazaire people were much more ready to accept and cooperate with the social program of the "foyer" connected with the easily understood transport work, than they would have been to see a community center run by strange Americans appearing all by its self.

To appreciate this it is necessary to consider some of the strange currents in thought of the St. Nazaire people. Their deep but politely concealed resentment toward Americans for the useless destruction of their city, is a good starting point for understanding their feelings. (I discussed this at some length in a letter to Marnie Schaufler sometime in about April.) Then there is the phenomenon of abnormally acute political sensitivity on the part of the people. Political consciousness, fear, jealousy and suspicion, obsess people's minds like haunting dreams. None of us Americans understands the seriousness of this malady for it seems so preposterous. But it does exist. It seems to me that at a time when the French people as a whole have lost faith in the Church as a dynamic force, and have lost faith in the corrupt and squabbling Government in Paris, they seem to be reaching all the more avidly for the hope of security in some political party. Thoughtful French people are alarmed as they are disgusted with this ugly fact.

Now to relate this to the "Foyer des Amis". When Harry and Pat Burks first came (in March) to start the community center, there was opposition on the part of Monsieur Riviere, president of the citizens association in Herbins, because he, a communist, had heard that the Quakers were a kind of religion. We did not hear of this opposition until several weeks later, at which time it had all passed over. M. Riviere's opposition was not shared by many others, if any, that we ever heard of. And he himself was quickly put at ease about the matter, as ~~xxxx~~ informed him more fully on the whole picture. In any case the incident does suggest the chip-on-the-shoulder attitude of some people, - many people. This fact is just one of the many things that will constitute problems for Harry and Pat and Babs, but their seriousness is perhaps all the more reason why the community should be helped to integrate itself and relax.

To date the people have accepted the "Foyer des Amis" in the best spirit to be hoped for. They were favorably disposed generally from the start, having had no fear of those plain big non-political trucks that had carried so many families to their new homes in St. Nazaire. It was Mlle. Ducros who had told me way back in February that from the point of view of public opinion toward the proposed community center, it would be preferable to have one Quaker Transport truck operating over a two-month period, than to have two trucks operating for one month. Harry Burks and I thought all along, as we do now, that Mlle. Ducros was right.

THE "FOYER DES AMIS" BECOMES OF AGE

The need for transport will probably continue at about the present rate for the rest of the summer and fall, and hence it would be desirable from all points of view if Quaker Transport could continue for that time, with perhaps one truck. But on the other hand, (and in this Harry Burks and I are in complete accord.) if the truck and personnel are not available, then the "Foyer" has already gotten sufficient start in its program and in its standing with the people, that it can go on alone. Harry could well say to Gordon, as indeed he has said, "I hope you stay all summer or even longer. But if more urgent needs call you elsewhere, then we can get along all right."

EPILOGUE

I now bring this report to a close. I hope that there has appeared in these pages some indication of the pleasure and satisfaction it gave us to participate in the work I have described. To you friends in America* who have participated with your work and your support of all kinds, I express my gratitude at having been privileged to represent you here in the field, in bombed burned St. Nazaire.

Furthermore I hope you feel some consciousness of having yourselves taken part in the work here. For actually you did, from a greater distance but just as really. And I feel that whatever good-will the Quaker Transport team has manifested toward the hundreds of people we have known and served, has been ultimately your good-will that we represented or conveyed.