

Rock Sleuth Finds Lovely Gems



LOOKING UP AT A LOVELY LADY, Harold Warner, District Sales Manager, greets Ann Herring, Miss North Carolina, as she arrives at RDU. Miss Herring was enroute to Roanoke Rapids for a day of festivities in her honor. Traveling with her were her mother and her business manager, Bill Venable. Photograph by Bob Allen, News and Observer, Raleigh, N. C.

Robert Highsmith is a Rock Hound.

That means he has a hobby of mining and collecting precious and semi-precious stones. He's been at it for nearly five years, with some beautiful results.

Robert's favorite mining grounds of late are in and around the Holbrook and Gibson mines, abandoned by Tiffany Jewelers, N. Y., in the 20's. His latest find there is a ruby which was cut and placed in a ring for his wife.

The mines are located in the large Cowee Valley near Franklin, N. C. Highsmith makes several trips up each year to hunt for gems to add to his collection.

"It's hard work," said Robert. "The mines there are 'strip mines' — that is — they're mined from the surface. We sift the dirt just like the old goldminers used to do out west, and we've come up with blue, brown, and black sapphires, rubies, quartz, the 'North Carolina diamond,' and rhodolite (a variety of garnet)."

"Rock Hounding" seems to be a family affair with the Highsmith's. Robert's brother is also a gem collector, and through the years the two have gathered an extensive collection of North Carolina stones and a library of books on minerals and gems.

"You have to study to know what you're looking for," Highsmith remarked. "I've probably thrown away several valuable stones because I didn't recognize them in their rough state. The most valuable find at Holbrook mine last year was a ruby worth \$3,000."

"North Carolina is the show-place of the nation when it comes to mineral deposits, particularly in the western part," he went on. "We meet geologists and fellow Rock Hounds there from all over the country."



ROUGH AND POLISHED STONES in part of his collection are pointed out by Robert Highsmith. That's a ruby ring he's holding, and in the foreground, left to right are: quartz crystal, opals, ruby, a large topaz, and several sapphires in different colors.

When asked what he considered to be one of the most exciting parts of his hobby, he said, "I get the biggest thrill out of seeing the stones I find after they've been cut and polished. It's hard to tell what they'll look like in their rough state, and it's amazing to see how beautiful they are when they're finished. My brother and I hope soon to get equipment to do our own cutting and polishing."

Highsmith, a Mechanic Specialist, has been with Piedmont eight years. He and his wife, June, and their four children live in Winston-Salem at 2406 Westover Drive.

The photograph shows Robert with some of the jewelry made up from the results of his and his brother's expeditions. That's an idea for you ladies — if you want a ruby ring, get your husband to mine for it!

And Awaay We Go!

Take The Scenic Route --- Utah By Way Of Alaska

Jack Brandon to John Webster: "Wanna go to Utah?"

Webster to Brandon: "Yeah." Brandon to Webster (several hours later): "Wanna go by way of Alaska?"

Webster to Brandon: "Whyyy not?"

It may or may not have happened just this way, but Jack Brandon, INT Station Manager, and John Webster, Dispatcher, did start on a weekend trip to Brandon's hometown of Provo, Utah, and wind up in Anchorage, Alaska, instead.

The pair left Winston-Salem, flew to Washington, then to Seattle, changed planes and flew 1,450 miles to Anchorage,

They got there about 2 a.m. on a Sunday morning, though according to Brandon, it was a little difficult to tell what day it

was since all the stores, bars, and many other businesses were still going strong.

Webster and Brandon found a hotel room, slept for a few hours, had breakfast, gasped at the prices (two eggs, toast and coffee cost \$1.35), and did a bit of sightseeing and souvenir shopping.

Brandon's work as a cartoonist is familiar to all Piedmonitor readers, and he brought back a number of sketches from his Alaskan jaunt.

The two finally made it to Provo, Utah, but a few days later and in a considerably more round-about way than they had originally planned.

Said Brandon of the trip, "You might say it was a junket that covered about 10,000 miles and had no itinerary."

Aviation manufacturing is the largest industrial employer in the U. S. In 1958, 757,600 were employed in aircraft or parts manufacturing. Second biggest: motor vehicle manufacturing with 627,300 employees.

Three out of every four travelers between the United States and foreign countries (exclusive of travel over land borders) go by air. Ten years ago, only every other traveler went by air.

Airline service is now available to every U. S. city of more than 100,000 population, more than 75 per cent of the cities over 10,000, and fifty per cent of the cities over 1,000.

11,300,000 visitors went to Florida last year. 20 per cent went by car. The most popular public transportation medium was the airlines, who carried 14 per cent. The trains carried three per cent and the busses, three per cent.

Russian airline officials are coming over to study our methods. Tight security measures are called for to keep them from learning the secret of where the luggage spends all that time between the plane and the check room.

Here is one way of showing the high airline tax bill. Last year, for every passenger ticket

sold, the airlines made \$1.35 while the Government made \$4.88. The airlines, of course, pay all the normal business taxes. In addition, there is a ten per cent tax on domestic transportation.

In a recent issue of *Railway Age*, the editor said the following: "Despite all their imperfections, the fact remains that when you ring up an airline for information you usually get a prompt reply, and the employee who answers is, most of the time, courteous and helpful."

The trend in air freight is upward: Air freight ton-miles for domestic and international operations totalled 353,434,000 through 323,788,000 ton-miles for the first seven months of 1959.

