

Judy Walcott

Judy was the epitome of a “people person”. She acquired friends with all the avidity with which a miser pursues gold coins. Her friends were her life and her telephone was her lifeline. No problem was too large or too small to rate a full disclosure and a sympathetic response and often a wise suggestion for a corrective action. But if, as often happened, a warm shoulder to cry on was all that was needed, that was always available, too. She loved above all to be helpful to those in less fortunate circumstances. She worked with the “Meals on Wheels” programs in America, Scotland and Australia and, in Japan was very active in the operation of a Japanese orphan’s home being sponsored by the International Women’s Club of Tokyo.

Race was never a barrier to Judy. If a person needed comfort, help or just a friend, she was there to help no matter what color of skin or what language was used and somehow she managed to operate very effectively even when she didn’t know a word of the other person’s language. It sometimes didn’t quite work out though, as happened when she was called upon to help an Argentine lady converse with an apartment maintenance man in Baltimore, MD and Judy tried to help but for some reason tried to do it in good clear Japanese. It all worked out, though and the Argentine lady became a very good friend. Her skills were also tested on a flight from Holland to Los Angeles when the flight was disrupted by mechanical problems with the aircraft and an elderly Yugoslavian couple were left stranded in Amsterdam. They spoke no English and were completely bewildered by their situation. Judy took it upon herself to shepherd them thru their delay which involved an overnight stay in a motel, in itself an “Alice in Wonderland” experience, and the subsequent flight to Los Angeles. No one at the airport nor on the flight spoke the language of the couple (there were seven languages spoken in Yugoslavia), but somehow Judy muddled thru and it all came out satisfactorily. The last we saw of them, they were meeting with their son, an apparently prosperous young man at the airport.

THE MICRONESIAN ADVENTURE

The year was about 1967 and I was in Los Angeles between assignments and was working in the Westinghouse office while waiting for my new task to begin. One day, about three in the afternoon, we received a phone call from our man in Hawaii (Jay Schultz), telling us that we were about to have some visitors.

It transpired that Westinghouse had taken a contract to set up and operate a training facility for the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps was preparing to send a number of their people to Micronesia to help the islanders to cope with the modern world and, to prepare the Peace Corps people for the task they were facing, it was decided to bring two or three people from each of the islands to a Westinghouse operated school to teach their Peace Corps volunteers the languages and customs of the native islanders.

The native representatives of the islanders were being sent to Hawaii and, after the entire group was assembled, they were to be transferred on to Key West, Florida where the training facility was to be operated. All went well until the airlines went on strike and all airline traffic from Hawaii was to be discontinued that night.

Jay Schultz was an intelligent man, quick to assimilate a problem and devise a practical solution. He didn’t have all the facts but he had enough to immediately decide that he definitely did not want to play nursemaid to fifty Micronesians for an indeterminate time.

His solution was to get them all on the last available airplane with fares paid to Los Angeles.

Talk about passing the buck! The airlines in the U.S. were also going on strike that night so that was as far as he could send them. His message to us was simply: "You will have fifty Micronesian natives arriving at your location at 11:00 PM tonight. Please see that they have food, lodging and whatever else they need while awaiting transportation to Key West.

Field engineers are supposed to be adaptable but, being faced with the task of assuming the care of fifty people about whom we knew absolutely nothing and with only eight hours to make all arrangements seemed to be stretching the limits. We didn't know if they spoke English, how they would be dressed, would they have "bones in their noses without any clothes" or much of anything else about them so we simply had to assume the worst and hope for the best.

By 11:00 PM, we were at the airport with all available Westinghouse employees (3) and their family members (4) with their cars and a few taxis to transport our guests to a motel we had made arrangements with for their lodging, for a restaurant to accept meal tickets we had printed up for each of the persons on the list and approval for each person to be given a small amount of spending money each day.

However, there was one small problem we had not anticipated. Several of our guests had brought their wives and babies with them and disposable diapers were obviously not a big item in their culture so, when one of our wives asked what they were to do, it devolved upon me, as a competent practicing engineer to provide an intelligent and practical solution. As a result, I am fairly certain that I am the only electronics field engineer in history to submit an expense report itemizing six dozen disposable diapers, small, medium and large and have it approved.

As it turned out, our guests were amazingly adaptable and we thoroughly enjoyed our association with them. All of the islands were very small and the conditions were quite primitive. Most of them had no electricity and many were too small even to have roads so cars were a novelty to most of the group. The ride from the airport to the motel was the first time in an automobile for a number of them and a drive on the freeways of Los Angeles must have been like something out of science fiction to them. Their lack of sophistication was made apparent when we were checking them in at the motel. It was necessary to determine their names to register them but, when we tried to find them, the men had all disappeared. When we found them, they were all on their knees at the entrance to the motel. The doors operated automatically and the men were trying to figure out how they worked. The dwellings on the islands usually had no doors of any kind so anything of that nature must have seemed like pure magic.

They learned amazingly fast. When they arrived at the airport they were dressed in clothes that they had ordered from catalogs and the fit was rather haphazard. It was quite obvious that the women had dresses but nothing under them and some of the men told us that that was their first time to wear trousers. The dress of the day on many of the islands was loin cloths. By the time they left for Key West though, they were dressed as fashionably as any of the Native "Angelenos" and had proved to be able to take strange circumstances in stride. We even made arrangements to take them all to Disneyland one day which we found out later was the high point of their trip. It must have been similar to landing in the middle of a Startrek episode.

A few of the Micronesians had brought their wives and young children with them and we decided to take the ones with family members home with me to allow them a look at what life was like in a modern American home. There were fifteen of the Micronesians who fit that description.

Some wives might be a bit upset by being told that they were going to be hosting fifteen visitors for a day and, “by the way, they may have bones in their noses and without any clothes” but Judy seemed to be rather unperturbed (perhaps because she was contemplating divorce as an alternative to murder).

Being hostess to people who had never seen a modern washer or kitchen range and whose houses did not have walls may seem a bit of a challenge but Judy took it all in stride with even a bit of education in the uses of disposable diapers being dispensed in a spirit of amity.

As it turned out, the guests were acceptably clothed, did not have bones in their noses and, except for some language difficulties, were most welcome guests and everyone seemed to enjoy the encounter. Even our neighbors seemed to be more bemused by them than hostile. And Judy did not institute divorce proceedings. As a matter of fact, she spent the day cuddling up some of the darkest-skinned babies one might ever see to the obvious enjoyment of all concerned.

She learned early to “roll with the punches” and make the best of whatever came along. Sometimes she was tested as when I had just completed an assignment to Scotland and we had packed up and shipped all our household goods back to California leaving us with only the clothing needed for the trip home.

We had purchased our airline tickets and were ready to leave when I received a call from our office in Baltimore, Md. This was on a Thursday evening. My boss asked me if I could go to Naples, Italy and go aboard the USS Enterprise the following Wednesday. I explained that I had a family in Scotland and they did not have a home in America to go to so it was impossible. He said he would try to make alternative plans. An hour later, he was back on the phone telling me I had to be on board the ship next Wednesday. I told him that I would have to do something with my wife and daughter and Scotland had laws against drowning them. He said he would see what could be done. He was back the next morning telling me to take them with me, get them settled somewhere in Europe and GET ABOARD THAT SHIP NEXT WEDNESDAY! I did.

We spent a hectic few days but, with the help of a couple of Mormon missionaries and a kind-hearted Frenchman named Mr. Barbee we got it all done. And that is how I’ve delighted in telling everyone that we spent a summer vacation in an apartment in San Raphael in the middle of the French Riviera while I cruised the Mediterranean on the 75,000 ton yacht that I owned (with some other people). It turned out that the man who Westinghouse had assigned to the Enterprise had become unhappy and had simply told the boss that he was leaving the ship next Wednesday and going home. The Navy takes a dim view of such activity by their own personnel and doesn’t much like it with their tech reps either.

As a result, Judy and Kathy got to spend a most memorable summer and fall traipsing around Europe, meeting me at the ports of call. They were accompanied by the ladies the navy personnel refer to as “The Seagulls” (because they followed the ships), and who met the sailors with; shall we say, open arms at every port of call.

(Information regarding the movement of military troops or ships is supposed to be kept very secret but, if anyone wanted to know the next port of call of one of the U.S. navy ships in the Mediterranean, they would only have to ask one of the “ladies of the night” in Paris or Marseilles).

To top it all off, Judy and Kathy were in Athens when it came time to return to the states and, due to special program with the airlines and American Express, Kathy was able to extend her trip with a two week long return visit to her friends in Scotland at no extra charge.

This is not to say that Judy was always completely composed and imperturbable. When we went to France, we were informed that we could deposit dollars into our bank account as a “dollar account” and withdraw them in American currency when we were ready to leave France.

However, just as we were ready to leave, France had another of their perennial monetary crises and the first thing they did was to freeze all foreign bank accounts. Judy was informed that she could withdraw money in Francs but not dollars and that the most she could take out of the country in any currency was the equivalent of \$150.00. She checked with the American consulate and was told there was nothing they could do so she was on her own. I was on my way to Malta and there was no way for her to contact me.

Her solution was to draw the money out in francs, secrete it on her person and get out of France. She told Kathy how to contact me in Malta if she was in a French jail, got on an airplane with bulges where one normally finds curves, and went to Malta. The next morning, she read the papers which reported the French authorities were searching all travelers and confiscating money, jewelry, furs and any expensive luxury goods that could be exchanged for money. She has never yet expressed any desire for a return visit to France.

Our next assignment was to Australia where I was to help train the RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) personnel on the APQ-120 radar system and which turned out to be the most pleasant assignment of my entire career. They spoke English or at least they said they did although to our American ears it often seemed otherwise but the natives were friendly, the climate was most acceptable (the Ambersley RAAF base is very near Brisbane and just on the edge of the tropics) and the work was pleasant and the neighbors were absolutely wonderful. They didn't even become hostile when we introduced them to Texas chili. They told us that they tried it but did not become addicted. We found it strange that they ate quite a lot of pumpkin,(often mixing it with mashed potatoes) but had never tried pumpkin pie so, when we celebrated Thanksgiving we baked a few extra pies and distributed them to the neighbors. They were a definite success (at least with the kids).

Judy, of course, was in her element. She made a lot of fast friends, was active with the Meals on Wheels program and took up photography as a hobby and, best of all, had a telephone she could use which she did with great gusto. We were sorry to leave such a dream assignment but we had no choice. We were not ready to stop eating.

Our next assignment was to Japan where I was to act as Westinghouse representative with the Mitsubishi company on a co-production effort when they were setting up a manufacturing facility to produce a Westinghouse designed airborne radar system.

Going from a tropical midsummer in Australia directly to a frigid midwinter in Japan was not very pleasant event to say the least. To make matters worse, the shops in Tokyo did not carry clothes to fit our American sized frames. We shivered thru though, and as soon as Judy became mobile in a tiny 360 CC engine powered automobile and got acquainted with some of the other Foreign women who introduced her to a host of Japanese women, she was back in her element, making friends and getting involved in all sorts of activities. She tried flower arranging, wood carving, doll making and anything else that came along but never really hit her stride until she found a Japanese orphanage that was sponsored by the Tokyo foreign women's club. Children in Japan who do not have families are essentially non-entities so those kids needed love more than anything else and Judy and her co-workers supplied it in large doses. She loved it and the kids loved her

She was a rather small person but with an oversized heart who delighted in helping other people, especially those who were disadvantaged in any way. She is gone now but she will live on in the memories of so many people all over the world. Her passing leaves a void that just can't be filled. We just hope that her life and her actions will inspire others to follow in her path and spread the joy of giving that she knew so well and practiced so fervently.

As her epitaph, I adapted a part of a poem by George Linnaeus Banks entitled "What I live For". That was Judy!

EPITAPH FOR JUDY

She lived for those who loved her,
Whose hearts were kind and true,
For the heaven that smiled above her,
And awaited her spirit too,
For all human ties that bound her,
For the tasks by God assigned her,
For the bright hopes yet to find her,
And any good that she could do.

She lived for those who loved her,
For those who knew her true.
For the heaven that smiled above her,
And awaited her spirit too;
For the cause that needed assistance,
For the wrong that needed resistance,
For the future in the distance,
And any good that she could do.