

## SOCIAL NOTES

— Homemaking —  
*Happenings About Town*  
 — Gardening —

### OF THIS AND THAT

By Betha Digree

It is always a pleasure to welcome Barbara Dimock, who lives in Anchorage, to Kodiak. Barbara, who is a member of the "Mile Post" staff, arrived Sunday. She is currently touring the state in connection with her work for the well-known travel guide. Barbara, who has made frequent trips to this area, always gives us a lift with her ready wit and warm smile. She brings us a breath of the outside world that takes us out of the constrictive routine of island living . . . At least for a few days . . . We wish that Barbara, who left for the mainland Thursday afternoon, would come here much more often . . .

We have been poring over a jumbo folder of pictures sent by the Roland Vickery family showing the beauties of Florida . . . Sandy beaches, blue skies, pretty

girls in sunsuits picking oranges, macaws, pelicans, graceful pink flamingos and flowering poinciana trees . . . After gazing at the pictures a few minutes we almost felt the warm sunshine . . . Then we happened to look out of our office windows and rapidly returned to cold reality . . . When we saw the grey, lowering clouds and the rain falling, our imagination no longer ran riot . . . We sadly returned to the world of chilly dampness. It was fun dreaming for awhile, tho.

We had a most enjoyable lunch at the home of Justine Hinckle Thursday. The other guests, Barbara Dimock and Fostina Johnson, showed much more restraint than this writer, who couldn't resist a large second serving . . . Just one of the greedy people . . . Must get Justine's recipe, tho, for that delicious casserole dish . . .

### Book Review

**The Good Years**, by Walter Lord.  
 Published by Harper & Brothers.

Walter Lord became fascinated with the whole turn-of-the-century period while engaged in research for *A Night to Remember*. It was this book, a Book of the Month Club Alternate Selection in 1956, that made Lord's reputation as a unique historian-narrator. In it he described in detail that fateful night in April, 1912, when the White Star liner Titanic hit an iceberg in the North Atlantic and sank, with a loss of over 1500 of her 2000 passengers.

It occurred to Lord as he collected material from contemporary accounts and from personal interviews with the few survivors still living in the 1950s that, quite apart from the Titanic tragedy, the people of the 1900-1914 era had had the best of everything. They had enjoyed the Good Years. As Lord expresses it:

"Good, not because rich men rode in private railroad cars and Society gave magnificent parties. Most people rarely traveled, and many went to no parties at all.

"Good, not just because the world was at peace. Millions of so-called 'little brown brothers' took violent exception to America's fumbling (if well-intentioned) imperialism.

"Good, not even because a shirt cost only 23 cents. The child who often made the shirt got only \$3.54 a week.

"These years were good because, whatever the trouble, people were sure they could fix it. The solutions differed, of course—Theodore Roosevelt had his Square Deal, Carry Nation her hatchet—but everyone at least had a bold plan, and could hardly wait to try it."

But before Lord could get started on a book highlighting the events, personalities and tone of those buoyant and exuberant days, he was asked by a national magazine to dramatize what had happened at Pearl Harbor in 1941. The resultant book was *Day of Infamy*, the title having been suggested, as many will recall, by President Roosevelt's famous six-minute address before a Joint Session of Congress, beginning, "Yes-

terday, December 7, 1941, a day which will live in infamy . . ."

Then, in the spring of 1958, Lord was asked to write a magazine piece on his research technique. When he went back to check his files on the Titanic disaster, he realized he had that turn-of-the-century fever again. He says: "I found it was simply impossible to be exposed to those gigantic ladies' hats, those huge brass headlights, those flashing teeth of Teddy Roosevelt, without wanting to write some more about those days. There was so much that delighted me I couldn't decide upon any particular phase, and the idea suddenly occurred to me to write about them all." The result was *The Good Years*.

To gather his material he studied newspapers and books by the hundred, as well as unpublished letters, diaries, even Pinkerton reports, filled with fascinating, hitherto unknown detail. Especially valuable were the interviews he was able to obtain with people who had figured prominently in the 1900-1914 period and who were now living quietly on the sidelines.

*The Good Years* is a vivid cornucopian book ranging in time and place from the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900 to the Panic of 1907, from Peary's dash for the North Pole in 1909 to the struggle for woman's suffrage which reached a climax (if not a resolution) in 1912. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in July of 1914 marked the end of the era; the good old days were gone, never to return.

### Benefit Dance Slated Sept. 4

A benefit dance, sponsored by the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, will be held at the National Guard Armory on Sunday, September 4. Music will be furnished by the "Twilighters" under the direction of Larry Adair.

All proceeds will be donated to the Health and Welfare Center to be used for eye and dental care of needy children. Tickets at \$1.00 each may be obtained from members of Boy Scout Troop No. 625.

## Dr. and Mrs. Johnson Lead Busy Life Despite Retirement—Recall Early Days

By Miriam J. Angell

Among many areas of beauty on Kodiak Island, one of the most beautiful we have seen is an eight-acre tract of handsome spruce lying between the northern shore of Shahaska Bay and an unnamed lake, all a part of the home of Dr. and Mrs. A. Holmes Johnson. We drove through a shaded grove to the house and thought of the forest primeval, and of European hunting lodges in deep, dim woods. Mrs. Johnson gave us a pleasant welcome and ushered us into a living room of marvelous proportions; a high beamed ceiling and walls of polished spruce logs cast

cemetary. There was no hospital at first, not for about two years. We did kitchen table surgery and I sterilized instruments in a pressure cooker. Especially during the war it was hard to keep nurses and I sometimes helped out in that capacity. The Grey Nuns took over the running of the hospital after the war."

Dr. Johnson told us that ships came in at less frequent intervals then and sometimes in winter, only every six weeks or two months. "No, there was no plane service then. The Coast Guard cutters took patients from the islands into Seward before we



DR. and MRS. A. HOLMES JOHNSON

a warm patina and reflected light from a fire in a fireplace that covered most of one wall. Mrs. Johnson told us that the stone of the fireplace was native to this area, as were the spruce logs and the cedar window frames.

"Our hearth is a piece of reef weighing half a ton; underneath it is rough and uneven so we had it set in and built the floor around it. Almost everything here is made of native materials."

Dr. Johnson joined us and traced the history of their home and their coming to the island. "We came up in '38 and that first year I hiked all around a five mile radius of the town, found this point of land and put in a homestead claim, only to learn that it was already under claim to someone else. He decided it to the mission; we bought the eight acres from them and started to build right after that. We had been building for six months when Pearl Harbor was bombed. All together it took two years to complete the house.

"As to why we came here, I took a vacation in Alaska one summer from my surgery practice in Portland, Oregon, and thought we might like to live here where life would not be so organized and there would be more leisure time. I stopped in Juneau on the way home and asked the possibilities of locating in Alaska. A year later Dr. Council, Commissioner of Health, wrote and told me there was no surgeon to the Westward and if I wanted the job we might come to Kodiak. Later I was asked to practice surgery in Anchorage but we prefer Kodiak."

Mrs. Johnson added some memorabilia of their early days in Kodiak. "When we came in 1938 there were only about five hundred and fifty people here. We had the fourth vehicle in town of which ours was one of two still running. The other was an oil truck owned by Erich Mueller.

Whenever there was a funeral he took out the tanks and used the truck as a hearse, and mourners walked along behind to the

father, a Bishop of the Methodist Church who was at that time in Central Africa. When the United States declared war on Germany he rejoined the service as a lieutenant in a tank corps of the AEF. By 1929 he had gotten his MD and had had five years post graduate study at Oxford University. Between 1929 and 1938, when he came to Kodiak as the only surgeon west of Seward, Dr. Johnson spent years of study and medical and surgical practice in the British Isles and in Oregon. He has compiled an impressive list of memberships in various medical organizations as well as authorship of a number of articles devoted to his special interest, diseases of the chest. In Kodiak, Dr. Johnson's contributions to the community have been far more than medical alone; he has given time and effort to many civic organizations and to the inspiration and inception of the Kodiak and Aleutian Islands Historical Society.

"There were originally seventy-eight charter members; we made a small beginning because our funds were, and are, limited. Dr. Ted Banks, an anthropologist from the University of Michigan, felt that Kodiak should be the nucleus of scientific research and development for the islands area, all of which is rich in history and anthropology, but though we approached several foundations, we were never successful in raising funds to finance our best ideas. Meanwhile the Society is collecting artifacts and historical data and doing a nice job of preserving what would otherwise be lost to posterity."

Both Dr. and Mrs. Johnson belong to many other civic clubs and organizations. Although he still does surgery, his son, Dr. R. Holmes Johnson, took over his active medical practice five years ago. Dr. Bruce Keers joined him two years ago. "That is probably the most gratifying thing of our whole Alaskan experience, that Bob wanted to become a doctor and wanted to come here. Those two young men would rather be

(Continued on Page 9)

### Frontier Record Flower and Gift Shop

A new shipment of  
**PATENT LEATHER PUMPS**  
 Sizes up to 3

Phone 2631

9-6 Weekdays  
 10-8 Friday



## Anna's Apparel

Queen Modes  
 Fall and Winter  
**COATS**

Insulated linings  
 for all-weather comfort.

★  
 Phone 2452