

REST YOUR OARS ON AN ISLAND

By Rafe Gibbs

SOME FOLK lament as gone forever the “good old days” when leisurely living was as common as bowler hats and ruffled parasols on a Sunday afternoon. But that’s because they’ve never tasted island life . . . haven’t put their car on a Puget Sound ferry at Mukilteo, Washington, for instance, and churned over to Whidbey Island. The islanders—both natives and “foreigners”—live gently, graciously in a delightful blend of the old and new.

Cradled in the left arm of Mother Washington where it rests on Puget Sound, Whidbey is the nation’s second largest island. Covering 172 square miles, it is almost as big as New York’s Long Island, but there any similarity ends. Whidbey is not thickly populated, unless you count trees, ferns, and wild berry bushes and flowers. Oak Harbor, with a heritage as Dutch as wooden shoes, is the biggest town: population, 1,193. Coupeville, once known as the Port of Sea Captains because of the many ancient mariners who retired there, is next, with 379 inhabitants.

During a visit to the island, we walked up a rose-bordered path to a trim Coupeville cottage to pay our respects to Mrs. Hattie Swift Race

—a charming, silver-haired lady living among sturdy and delicate furnishings that came ’round the Horn from New England almost a century ago. Her father, Cap’n James Henry Swift of the New Bedford Swifts, first saw the island in ’54, when he came to load spars, and returned to make his home there in ’63.

“Father used to say that we never had to leave the island, because the world is right here,” explained Mrs. Race. “He loved to take me riding in a buggy, too, and show me the world. He’d point his whip at the white cliffs across the bay, and say, ‘Now, Hattie, you are looking at the Cliffs of Dover.’ Gazing at a patch of dwarf oaks was to see Japan. The island’s coves were the Norwegian fiords; a sandy beach at Monroe’s Landing, part of the Virgin Islands; the square bluff over at Oak Harbor, a slice of the China Sea coast. Where else could the world be seen from a buggy?”

The inn at Coupeville a century ago was the home of peg-legged, sea-faring John Alexander. And there is still much of the home about it—hooked rugs before a fireplace of white-painted brick, with anchors for firedogs, with swinging oil lamps for mantel glow . . . and a spool settee beside a quietly ticking grand-

father's clock . . . a peaceful spot of old-world charm.

Over in Oak Harbor, there is a clearer demarkation between the old and new. A Navy air base has been built there, and giant planes roar above the giant oaks which gave the harbor its name. The planes may disturb the natives, but nothing disturbs the oaks. It's against the law to cut one down. If a new street is opened, it must be built around the oaks. After all, the oaks were there first.

It doesn't take you long to see why Navy personnel who have served at Oak Harbor are coming back there to retire. In San Diego, California, there is even a Whidbey Island Club of those who plan to retire on the island.

Army men, also, have long looked to Whidbey for retirement. Not far from Coupeville is old Fort Casey, with its early-century cannon mounts rusting in the morning dew, with cows grazing on the parade ground. For years, old-timers who served at the now abandoned fort have been returning to live out their lives at Coupeville.

MANY who retire on the island go into farming — in a mild sort of way. The rich, loam soil needs little prodding. It was on Whidbey that the world-record crop of wheat was grown some years ago — 117.5 bushels to the acre.

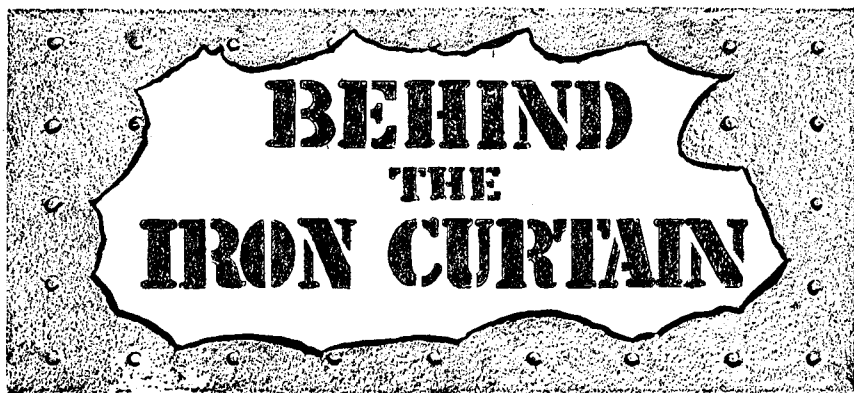
A good highway runs the 42-mile length of the island. As you drive

along you may see cows browsing in a little pasture on one side of the road, wild deer shying off into the forest on the other side, cottontails taking turns piloting you up ahead. Seldom are you away from the Sound more than a few minutes. You see sea gulls opening clams by dive-bombing and dropping them on dock or rock, fish ducks flipping down into the water for crabs and never coming up without one.

You pass little settlements with such salty names as Fisherman's Alibi, wind and sea-weathered cottages, still sturdy log blockhouses built as defense against the Indians, a Dutch settler's quaint farm home complete with windmill for grinding meal. And then you come to Deception Pass.

Across the pass has been built a 1,350-foot bridge to link Whidbey with Fidalgo Island. You look down upon the channel between the two islands, and see one of the world's greatest forces of water in action — 2,500,000,000 gallons spilling through the gorge hourly at ebb tide. You feel small . . . very small.

You don't start puffing up again until you go fishing . . . and catch a salmon — maybe 3 pounds, maybe 53. Then you know the contentment that the islanders know. Then, too, you have a clue to island politics, for the fishing village of Double Bluff on Useless Bay has a new mayor every year. That's the man — or woman — who catches the biggest salmon the first day of the season!



Satellites Give Up Hope

BY ALAN SET

WHAT is the effect of the West's diplomatic hobnobbing with Russia on the one hundred million enslaved Europeans behind the Iron Curtain?

This question is certainly worth answering, for much of the Soviet Union's rapidly growing economic and military power derives from ruthless exploitation of her European colonies — Poland, Eastern Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania and Albania. The question is the more important because one of the main reasons why a Third World War has so far been avoided is that Moscow felt that her hands were tied. Any major adventure was much too

risky as long as there existed the danger of a spontaneous revolution of peoples located in Europe's strategically most important area — peoples who were longing to re-establish their Western way of life.

What we learn from the incoming reports is alarming, to say the least. We learn that in the satellite countries today there is incomparably less resistance to the Communist regimes than there was at the height of the cold war. The Geneva Conference appears to have brought a decisive blow to their hopes of liberation. Seeing that they have no choice, the Poles, Czechs and other satellite populations begin to turn to "loyal collaboration" with the