

IN THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH it is written: "Moreover, I said unto the king (of Persia), if it please the king, let me pass thru till I come unto Judah."

For centuries, letters, in one form or another, served as passports everywhere. Today, with easy transportation, passports—once the concern of only a relative few—are a matter of attention for millions.

Last year, the Passport Office of the Department of State processed 585,994 passports, up from 559,066 in 1956. This year's total is expected to push 700,000, reaching 5,000 a day at the peak of the summer travel season. In 1912, as a comparison, only 21,700 U.S. passports were issued.

The Passport Office is a profitable business for Uncle Sam, too. Last year it spent a little over \$2,000,000 and brought in well over \$4,000,000.

At the head of this rare money-making government agency is Frances Knight. An ex-government secretary who worked her way up to the top through the Civil Service stepladder, Miss Knight took over the Passport Office in 1955. In her three years in office she's made more radical but welcome changes in the issuing of passports than had been accomplished in the last 100 years.

Getting a passport used to be a tedious procedure. As late as 1955, the time lapse between application and issuance was three to six weeks, depending upon the time of the

*more speed and greater efficiency
now serves more travelers-abroad*

SHE PUT PROMPTNESS IN YOUR PASSPORT

by James H. Winchester

year. Now, it's about four days sometimes only two. This welcome speed-up is Miss Knight's doing. One of the first things she found when she took over her job was a jumble of 1,000,000 documents, many of them unfiled and some only partially indexed. They had been accumulating for years.

She installed a system that placed the papers where they were instantly available. This reduced file searching from 21 per cent to 3 per cent of applications and increased filing efficiency from 300 units per day per clerk to 1,300.

As Miss Knight tells it: "We had a complete reorganization, changing most of the old procedures, eliminating red tape and introducing modern business methods and

machinery for the handling of mail, records, accounting, processing and filing."

She went on then to apply more common sense to the operation of her office. No housewife orders a crate of oranges when she needs only a dozen. Applying that reasoning to passports, Miss Knight found that nobody used the 32 pages supplied, so she cut them to 20 and saved a whopping amount of money in paper costs. At the same time she redesigned the passport application, cut down its size and combined three forms into one.

CORRESPONDENCE is a big item in the Passport Office. The mail rate is 1,000,000 pieces a year, and this takes time to answer. Miss Knight estimated that there were about 100 questions a person could ask about passports and she put the answers on forms. That one step has reduced individual replies by 75 per cent.

Another innovation is the returning of birth certificates and other private documents, which used to be kept permanently in the files, to their owners. Not only does this eliminate a lot of filing and release storage space, but it also cuts down on lengthy argumentative correspondence.

Instead of affixing photos to passports, by hand, Miss Knight installed a gluing machine which now smears the backs of photos at the rate of 500 an hour.

Impressing the seal of the Department of State and serrating the legend on the passport formerly required two machine-feeding operations. A combination machine that does both simultaneously is now used. Again, five operations were condensed into one through purchase of a stamper that records on each passport application the date of issue, the place, and the number, at the same time stamping a control card for easy reference.

In its public inquiry section, the passport office now maintains 580,000 individual status cards so that in a matter of seconds a clerk can tell whether a passport has been issued, when it was mailed, where it was sent or whether it is being held for further information. Now only 15 per cent of applications require more than four days, and that's because of insufficient identification, incomplete information or incorrect fees.

The speed-up steps have developed their own efficiency. Phone inquiries used to number about 1,000 a day. Now that applicants get what they want with dispatch they don't have to phone about it. Calls have dropped to 300 a day.

Passport applications are accepted today at 3,800 state and federal courts throughout the country. But they are issued only at Washington and six branch offices in New York, Boston, Chicago, New Orleans, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Teletype communication between

these field offices and Washington, installed as part of the efficiency drive, helps to save time.

THE TERMINOLOGY on the passport application has been greatly simplified. One phrase—"List the name of your spouse"—caused much misunderstanding. Nearly half of the people, in filling out their forms, would have to take time to ask a clerk what "spouse" meant. This phrase was changed to read "wife or husband" instead of "spouse." And it speeded up the processing of applications.

"We are not married to the present format of the passport, nor should we be bound forever to the procedures or regulations of the past," Miss Knight stresses. "I like to think of precedence as stepping stones to more efficient and effective public service in the future."

The carelessness of citizens in handling their passports is one thing that completely baffles the usually unbaffleable Miss Knight.

In 1957, over 3,000 passports were lost and approximately 1,200 were mutilated. In the first category were passports destroyed by fire or flood or in accidents or other catastrophes over which the individual bearer had no control. This type of mishap is understandable. Second, are passports which were lost down drains, fell into bathtubs, fountains and swimming pools, or were chewed up by children or puppies.

In the mutilation category, the

Passport Office continues to get the usual number of unauthorized changes in the description of the applicant as well as the date of birth.

Spilled ink and nail polish and cigarette burns are the major excuses for the obliteration of the year of birth, but time marches on—and more recently spray perfumes and deodorants have been named as the culprit for such blots.

Then there are those persons, particularly women, who like to tell others they are really younger than their passport states. They change the date of birth on the passport.

"But we just slap their wrists a little," says Miss Knight. "This isn't a serious enough offense to send these people to jail."

While the handling of applications and the mechanical job of issuing U.S. passports are Miss Knight's headache there are other special passport problems on higher levels, most of them centered around the Secretary of State.

John Foster Dulles is slowly yielding the concept he inherited from his predecessors that the Secretary of State has absolute discretion over which American citizens may or may not have passports.

He is doing this under pressure from the courts, as they rule on passport cases, and the cold war supposition that Americans must not appear to have an iron curtain between its people and those of the rest of the world. The State De-

partment now concedes the Secretary has no absolute discretion over passports.

THIS CONCEPT was laid down by Roderic O'Connor, chief of the State Department's security consular bureau, who defined a passport as "a document of identity and nationality." He says, "Refusal of passport facilities . . . does not necessarily prevent the citizen from traveling."

It is true, say other State Department experts, that an American citizen without a passport could leave the United States under certain circumstances, but would probably find it difficult to enter any country overseas—and would face greater difficulty upon return to this country.

Officials explain that under the Korean war emergency laws, still on the books, American citizens may not leave the United States for any place except the western hemisphere without a passport. No passports are required for travel to Canada and Latin America.

O'Connor has also sought to clarify the department's position on a second major criticism, that present passport administration denies the citizen the basic constitutional guarantee of the right of due process of law.

Under current regulations, passports are withheld for four basic reasons:

(1) If the applicant is trying to

evade the law—for instance, by escaping payment of taxes. (2) If the area of expected travel is hazardous. (3) If such travel is contrary to United States interests. (4) If the applicant's health is not up to going abroad.

The major area of dispute lies in the question of United States interests. It is for this reason that persons who might advance the communist cause, even unwittingly, are denied passports.

The state department feels confident it can maintain its asserted right to deny passports on grounds involving foreign policy. The courts have already ruled they would not substitute their judgment of foreign policy for that of the secretary of state.

Today, if a person is denied a passport, he can appeal. Officials feel the passport appeals system is sound.

More in Miss Knight's line, however, is keeping tabs on the passports that are issued.

"Recently," she reports, "we've noted a marked increase in travel from certain states. California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Tennessee and Texas are the most active in this respect. We've noted an increase of 12 per cent in passports issued to naturalized citizens; a decrease in travel to Western European countries, but an increase to Eastern Europe. Our statistics also indicate a decrease in World Tour travel,

but an increase in general tour travel. . . .

"By 1959, we must be geared to handle three-quarters of a million passports, and by 1960, close to a million."

BORN in Newport, Rhode Island, Miss Knight, in private life, is the wife of Wayne Parrish, editor of a number of aviation industry publications. Educated in New York and in Catholic convents in Europe, she speaks French, Czech and German as well as English.

Miss Knight has done a bit of traveling herself, having visited each of the 48 states and foreign countries.

World-wide recognition for her streamlined operation came last year when the American Society of

Travel Agents and the World Travel Congress, meeting in Spain, passed this resolution:

"We recognize the continuing improvement and operation of the United States Passport Office and expressly commend its director, Miss Francis G. Knight, and her staff for their efforts in facilitating the expeditious obtaining of passports for the American traveling public."

Miss Knight was gratified but she believes that orderliness is a way of life.

"I could go into my kitchen blindfolded," she says, "and put my hand on the cinnamon jar."

She looks at her job this way: "I can sum up the task of my office in three words—speed, courtesy and efficiency."

Target—You!

The greatest asset our enemies have is the American Public's ignorance of their strategy, tactics, objectives, and operating methods in the U.S.A.

Subversive propaganda, which ranks as one of the enemy's most effective instruments of conquest, is now taking over our entertainment, educational system, and mass communications media. Business itself, through advertising budgets over ten billion dollars a year, is contributing to its destruction.

Reversing this disastrous trend is the most vital problem we face today.

The same media which the enemy uses to *subvert* the American public can also be used just as effectively to *alert* the public.

This is no job for amateurs, but for trained professionals who are thoroughly familiar, through personal experience and training, with the enemy's techniques, his operating methods, and his vulnerabilities. Such a program has been developed. (For details write to MERCURY.)

"COURT REWRITES CONSTITUTION IN ITS OWN IMAGE"

by Alfred J. Schweppe

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I ABSOLUTELY REJECT the idea that the Supreme Court has the power to rewrite the Constitution according to its concepts of sociological or economic change. That is what the amendatory process is for. I do not accept Justice Douglas's blunt view that the amendatory process is "too slow" as anything but a violation of the oath to support the Constitution in all of its parts.

In an address before the New York City bar in 1949, attempting to defend the Court's overruling of prior decisions, he calmly said: "It must be remembered that the process of constitutional amendment is a long and slow one."

The obvious answer is, of course, that the people have amended the Constitution fast or slowly, or not at all, as in their judgment the circumstances required. Since when has the judicial power of the Supreme Court been extended to passing on the competence of the people to frame their own government in

their own good time? With all due respect, such an attitude must be regarded as a self-arrogation of superior paternal wisdom which would have left the Founding Fathers stunned.

My view was shared by Washington, Jefferson, Jackson and others, some of whom are held up as great beacon lights of liberalism. I think legal recognition of sociological and economic changes should come by way of constitutional amendment, or congressional action, whichever is appropriate.

In my opinion, once the Court has construed a constitutional provision, that construction should stand until changed by amendment, unless later evidence is found of *the intent of the framers* of the provision which shows the first construction to have been erroneous. That, of course, is why Madison's "Notes," Elliott's "Debates," and the "Federalist" are so valuable.

Any other approach seems to me

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