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Recognition Dinner: Department of Education 1960

Western Michigan University

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I. Well, Winnie, it's a surprise to see you with this group.

W. I don't know why you should be surprised - you know I enjoy traveling.

I. Oh, I didn't mean that, but that you are ready.

W. Young man, I don't think it's for you to say when I'm ready.

I. Guess that was the wrong approach - What do you plan to do when you get to the moon?

W. I hope to organize a culture - since so little is known of life on the moon I'm sure there is no culture - I've read much and in my basket I've brought pictures and books to help in this. I'll blend various cultures together and have a "luncult". I'm sure other areas will need organization too just as you seem to need now.

I. This way, Miss Lunaree.

P. Lunaree——"m".

I. That's too bad. I noted your name on the applicant list and thought what a natural you must be with a name like Lunaree. Are you sure of the "M"?

P. The name is French and I like it. If you insist on a change, I'll not go on this trip. I still have the fortune I got for selling my first edition of Moby Dick and I don't have to work in my retirement. But, I wish to be of service. I ask not what the moon can do for me, but what I can do for the moon!

I. That sounds very Kennedy-an. Are you Kennedy-an?

P. No, I'm a Hoosier.

I. (Making a note) One of those conservative Republicans. What is the nature of your service, Miss Lunaree?

P. I am equipped to catalogue the first lunar library.

I. Dewey?

P. Do we; no we about it. I'm the cataloguer and I'll do the cataloguing myself!

I. You pass, dear lady; take any seat that you want. Next!
RF interjects comment during Lumaree interview: RF: "Fantastic! Absolutely fantastic."

Lumaree: "Cataloguing is not fantastic! You couldn't have written your book on the Mennonites if someone hadn't catalogued. Anyhow, why do you want to go on this expedition? What do you have in mind?"

Yntema: "Please, please! The Director of Field Services and Immediate Past President of the Michigan PTA will do the questioning. Robert, why do you want to join the lunar expedition?"

RF: "I have an interesting, may I say curious project." (He becomes thoughtful in a far-off manner).

Y: "Would you mind?"

RF: "No. Yes, I will tell you... Last summer Betty and I were in Austria. We walked in the mountains. One day we stopped in the little village of Unteroberheidenreichsteingau."

Y: "What town was that?"

RF: "Unteroberheidenreichsteingau."

Y: "It would be shorter in Dutch."

RF: "Possibly. Anyhow, Unteroberheidenreichsteingau in the seventeenth century was the home of an Anabaptist sect called the Moononites."

Y: "Don't you mean Mennonites?"

RF: "No. I mean Moononites. If I meant Mennonites I would have said Mennonites!

Y: "I'm sorry. Please go on."

RF: "The Moononites believed in a Lunar Heaven. On September 31, 1642, they disappeared. On that day the moon was nearest the earth. Now—my theory is, they went to the moon!"

Y: "Fantastic! Absolutely fantastic."

RF: "Well, maybe, maybe. Anyhow, I want to find out. That's why I want to join this expedition. I am extremely anxious to go—extremely. I will not even ask for a mileage allowance."

Y: "No mileage allowance?" You're the first person in my 17 years as Director of Field Services not to ask for mileage! Here! Sign this paper." (The paper is signed). "You're practically there."
I. Let's see here. What is your name?

M. Mathilde Steckelberg.

I. Is that l - e?

M. Oh, no! It's e - l, Teutonic, you know.

I. Oh, I see.

M. No, it's St e c k.

I. Well, Miss Steckelberg, why are you undertaking this expedition?

M. There's no particular reason.

I. How's that? This is most strange. Are you just going along for the ride?

M. Well, not exactly.

I. Do you intend to stay on the moon?

M. My plans are rather indefinite.

I. This is highly irregular. I must examine your papers. Yes, there's something that may be significant. I see that besides being a teacher of German, you have also been a student of Russian.

M. Yes, sir.

I. Is there a connection between your foreign languages and your purposes in this trip? Just why are you joining this group?

M. I'm afraid I just can't say about that.

I. Have you ever been a member of a subversive group like the German Bund or the Communist Party? What about this Der Deutsche Verein?

M. I'll have to decline to answer that question.

I. On what grounds?

M. I might incriminate myself.

I. Are you taking the Fifth?

M. Do you mean this vodka? This is for eventualities like snake-bites.

I. No, no! I mean the Fifth Amendment.

M. Well, Inspector, I didn't want to reveal my identity before everyone here, but you see this State Department card gives me clearance.

I. What? By golly, this is a surprise!

M. Yes, my friends have always called me Matt. Mathilde was a natural choice for a pseudonym.
I. Yes, but Mata Hari. Well, what do you know?

I. (Urbane, poised, in complete control) You are Miss Louise Walker?

L.W. Louise Jean Walker.

I. Ah, yes. Louise Jean Walker. I recall seeing your by-line in the Kalamazoo Gazette. You realize, of course, Miss Walker, that our offer of extending the emeriti into space involves careful screening?

L.W. Young man, I'm no fool. You won't find anything pink about me. And I'm experienced in making examinations myself. I expect to answer your questions easily and successfully. Fire ahead.

I. I am glad to hear that and to note your confidence. Now, what is your real reason for wanting to be on our lunar staff?

L.W. First, I understand that there is too little oxygen on the moon to make smoking possible.

I. You smoke?

L.W. Gracious sakes, no! But I long to attend one English department staff meeting where Fred Rogers and John Freund won't be able to smoke their pipes!

I. A worthy and charitable ambition. Who knows; you may see it fulfilled, though perhaps only on the moon. Still, your reason for wishing to go along must involve more than this. What talent do you offer to Field Services that is unique?

L.W. I know Indians.

I. You know Indian? You mean you will assist Miss Steckelberg in the linguistics program?

L.W. Assist! Gracious sakes, no! I said I know Indians, not Indian. I intend to collect and make a book of Moon Indian legends. The only difficulty that I am facing now, and it is so stupid on the part of Field Services, is that I am not going to be allowed to take this carton of Almond Joys. You really should have a workable policy about our luggage. I expect you to make them let me take this carton on board.

I. I'll see what I can do, but (curious) why is it so important that you take this carton of Almond Joys to the moon? Field Services always makes very generous allowances for food expenditures.

L.W. The best way to get a legend out of the native informant is to give candy bars to the children. Any fool knows that. This was my practice at Green Sky Hill. Flash a candy bar and they'll talk. I have a good start on my collecting already. What do you think of this: "How the man in the moon knows the difference between lie and lay."? But the best one is "Why all moon craters say 'GLA'"?

I. (Visibly beyond his depth) GLA?
I. You are one we surely want, Miss Louise Jean Walker. Step through.

L. No, I'm Louise C.

I. You have been teaching at Western for several years but I don't recall seeing you in the Student Center Grill having coffee.

L. I've taught out at Paw Paw and 17 miles is a long way to drive for a cup of coffee.

I. Well, Louise, since you've been teaching first grade I suppose you'll be interested in the children that live on the moon.

L. Yes, of course, I'll always be interested in children, but I thought with retirement I'd concentrate on my hobbies. I'm very anxious to see what the soil is like up there and study the plant life. Maybe I'll find some plants that I can bring back and introduce on earth. Wouldn't I be surprised if they have Lillies of the Valley on the moon.

I. What other hobbies do you have?

L. I collect antiques too. Do you suppose they have any on the moon?

I. I'm no authority on antiques but we've heard for a long time about the man in the moon and he must have a home and, being a man, there must be a woman around too. I'll bet you'll find that she is an antique collector too. Good luck to you.

I. Miss Hesselink, I trust you have filled out all of the necessary papers for this trip.

H. Oh, yes. But, I'm afraid you're going to have trouble with some of the others. You know, some faculty members just don't take the trouble to let us know when they have a change of address.

I. Do you consider that this will be a permanent change of address for you?

H. On the moon? Heavens, no! I can't afford to be gone very long; it costs so much. Anyway, I have to attend to so many things back here. And I don't know what Mr. MacDonald would do if he had to get out the budget sheets alone.

I. Well, we'll try to get you back---

H. (Cutting in) And Lloyd Jessen thinks I ought to write my memoirs.

I. That ought to be interesting; you've seen a lot of people come and go.
H.: I certainly have; but, you know, I think I could make more money from what I didn't write than I could from what I did write.

I.: Maybe you could write two books—one to publish and one to be paid for not publishing it.

H.: Yes! Well, I think about that. Isn't it about time for us to take off?

I.: Almost; well, have a good trip, Miss Hesselink. We'll be expecting to hear from you.

I.: Let's see, you are Miss Hussey?

H.: Yes, Doris Hussey.

I.: If you don't mind my saying so, I'm surprised to see you retiring from teaching so young.

H.: Well, now, that's sweet of you. Actually, I do feel quite sprightly; perhaps it's because of my training in physiotherapy—and, of course, I always watch my posture!

I.: I'll bet that man-in-the-moon will take a second look at you. Have you traveled very extensively before, Miss Hussey?

H.: No, not particularly. You see, my home is in Maine, and most of my travel has been between Maine and Kalamazoo.

I.: Haven't you had the urge to see other parts of the United States?

H.: What other parts are there? Well, I can't believe you fully appreciate the state of Maine. Have you ever heard of Damariscotta, Maine?

I.: No, I'm afraid I haven't.

H.: Well, then, you've never seen God's country.

I.: Will you be returning there after you get back from the moon?

H.: Oh, of course—unless I'm overcome by moon magic.

I.: (Laughing) Let us hear from you, anyway.

H.: You will.
W. Question? Question, please.
I. Yes?
W. I wonder whether there are sufficient provisions for participation among this group.
I. Aren't you retiring?
W. Yes, I've always been retiring, but I believe in participation, too. In my math classes, the students participated; they learned not only to do the processes, but also to explain them. I'd have a problem on the board, and a student would solve it and explain it at the same time. I'd say to her, "To the board, young lady. Chalk and talk." Participation, that's what I like.
I. You certainly seem earnest on this matter. By the way, do I have your name on my list?
W. Yes, I am earnest as well as retiring. My name is Ernest Weber.
I. Well, thank you, Mrs. Weber. Do you have any specific proposals to stimulate participation among this group?
W. Yes, I've been thinking about this problem. Of course, I should like for all of us to participate in the opportunity we shall have in space and time to help check Einstein's equations, but I suppose this idea is hardly practicable.
I. No, I agree with you there. Do you have anything else in mind?
W. Well, yes I do. You know, I have a hobby of gardening. I'm especially fond of raising gourds, a very interesting plant. But as my Evanston Street neighbors always remind me, gourds can cover a lot of ground. Now, I'm taking a good sampling of gourd seeds along with me, and I'm hoping that all of us can participate in some intensive gourd gardening. I'm anticipating lots of room on the moon, and there's just no imagining what fantastic shapes gourds may assume in that rarefied atmosphere. There may be something new on the moon.

Robinson: (Interrupts Weber's interview to comment on gourds) "Gourds! I didn't think anyone raised gourds anymore. They take me back to my boyhood days in Ohio—the moss-covered bucket that hung in the well."

Yntema completes his interview with Weber. Then he turns to Robinson.
Y. "William McKinley Robinson! Are you related to the William McKinley of the 1890's?"
R. "We both came from Ohio. He is still there."
Y. "True. But why do you want to go on this moonlight excursion?"
R. "Please! Let us not be facetious about this unique opportunity to observe lunar educational organization and procedures. My purpose is socio-educational."
Y. "That's as complicated as Robert's Austrian village. Tell me so a Dutchman can understand."

R. "I shall explain simply and briefly. The last 50 years have seen a remarkable urbanization of the population of this country. According to the Statistical Abstract of the United States, the rural population was 60.2% in 1890. Today it is 30.5%. Now, this centralizing tendency of our population has had far-reaching effects on our mores and our frames of reference--"

A. "The countdown will begin at 19:27 precisely."

Y. "Can you condense?"

R. "I am condensing. Out of these demographic changes have developed new attitudes towards the structural foundations of our society. For example: the school that in 1903 had blackboards, a terrarium and outside plumbing, today has--"

A. "The countdown is about to begin."

R. "--television, a solarium, and marble showers. Again, whereas the percentage of illiteracy among high school graduates in 1903 was 1.7, today it is 23.4. Now, it seems to me the direction of change in the last 50 years is dubious, to say the least. It has occurred to me that possibly the moon--"

A. "The countdown is beginning. TEN"

R. "--would provide an opportunity to observe an alternative direction--"

A. "NINE."

R. "--along the lines of a more slowly urbanizing population; and, I might say, the development of a more--"

A. "EIGHT"

R. "--desirable sort of society. With that in mind, I have prepared an outline--"

A. "SEVEN"

Y. "Sorry. We'll have to take the outline on faith. You're accepted."

R. "--the proper study of lunar socio-educational phenomena. Thank you."

A. "SIX"

Then the transition to the second scene.

FIVE

FIRE
Last Scene: Lumaree from Outer Space

I. And you, Miss Lumaree; are you ready for the long voyage home?

P.L. I want to get home all right, but I haven't finished my job here. I can't get through all the 891.7's and I---

I. (Turning pale and interrupting) My God, that's Russian Lit. Miss Lumaree, Miss Lumaree, are the Russians ahead of us in the race for library holdings? This is very serious; keep us informed, keep us informed. And don't hesitate to add it to your expense account.

Last scene: Walker from Outer Space.

I. Shall I put you down for the return trip, Miss Walker?

L. W. O wa-wa-wa! heap good legend hunting up here. I want to stay until I have these moon tales all collected. But send more Almond Joys with the next extension consignment. I'm getting low. You can't get a legend without an Almond Joy. (Fading away) O wa-wa-wa---