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UNIQUE PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE PROGRAM

HON. F. BRADFORD MORSE

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 24, 1971

Mr. MORSE. Mr. Speaker, there are many people-to-people programs in which Americans are taking increasingly active roles in making new friendships with peoples from distant lands.

I am pleased to direct the attention of my colleagues in the House to a unique and far-reaching program of this kind undertaken by the Wally Byam Foundation of Washington, D.C., and directed by Mrs. Carolyn Bennett Patterson, an assistant editor of the National Geographic magazine and board chairman of the foundation.

Chartered in 1962 as a nonprofit organization and named after the late Wally Byam, founder of the Airstream Co., travel trailer manufacturers, the foundation has applied the Byam good-neighbor concept by sponsoring 30-day cross-country trailer trips for foreign visitors through small-town America.

Before his death in 1962, Wally Byam sponsored American trailer caravan tours to Europe, Africa, and Asia with the primary goal in mind. He said:

When people of two different countries get to know each other, they discover that everyone is essentially the same, has the same problems, and enjoys the same things. This bond of fellowship is the only factor that can ensure peace.

In 1963, the foundation started a relatively modest refamiliarization program for returning American diplomats from overseas posts, first with the U.S. Information Agency and later on with the U.S. Department of State.

The diplomats were provided trailers and automobiles so that they might take leisurely tours of various parts of our great land and at the same time reacquaint themselves with grassroots America and thus obtain firsthand information on changes in American life, ways and thinking while they were away. At the same time, the diplomats gave press, radio and television interviews, and lectures on the nature of their assignment and duties abroad.

The exchange of views and opinions,

made possible by the foundation's "Rediscover America" program, resulted in a better understanding by Americans of our foreign policy and at the same time afforded our diplomats the opportunity to clarify misconceptions about Americans' role in foreign affairs.

In 1967, Mr. Speaker, the foundation took on a new and far more challenging assignment by sponsoring the "Caravan America" program, still carrying on the Wally Byam foreign friendship role. He once said:

We haven't a ghost of a chance to build firm international peace unless the citizens of every country understand the motives and way of life of every other country. There has to be a meeting.

The first Caravan America, launched in 1967, made possible tours of our national shrines, parks, and forests and an almost endless round of transcontinental hospitality for 20 British and 20 French families.

Caravan America was underway again last year with 20 German, 20 Swiss, and 18 foreign diplomatic families as participants. The families were chosen by ADAC, the German equivalent of our American Automobile Association, the Swiss Non-Commissioned Officers Association and the various foreign embassies accredited to the United States in Washington.

This is indeed a unique program, Mr. Speaker, initiated by the Wally Byam Foundation on a nongovernmental basis and without the expenditure of public funds.

C. H. Manchester, president of Airstream, Inc., a division of Beatrice Foods, describes the low key noncommercial company participation in the Foundation activities in these words:

The Foundation is financed by contributions made by purchasers of Airstream travel trailers, matched by a similar contribution by the Airstream company, together with contributions from interested trailer clubs and individuals around the country.

The foundation budget is a modest one, but its programs, however, are far-reaching in view of the vast reservoirs of goodwill which have been created since the foundation began its Rediscover America and Caravan America programs. Their success is due in great measure, Mr. Speaker, to the dynamic leadership of Mrs. Patterson in serving the foundation

on a voluntary unpaid basis as director of its activities.

What she is accomplishing is phenomenal, largely through her ability to get people, the right people, interested in the foundation's objectives. Backing her are numerous volunteers. For instance, advance planning and experienced caravan leadership are supplied by volunteers from the Wally Byam Club International. Members and private citizens, through chambers of commerce and other organizations, have enthusiastically assisted in welcoming arrangements for the foreign guests all across the land.

As an illustration of the volunteer work involved, I cite just one small welcoming activity here at the capitol last May for the 20 German families upon their arrival in Washington. New England, unfortunately, could not be included in the visitors' itinerary. Consequently, some typical Massachusetts hospitality was brought to Washington where a Capitol luncheon was held, featuring some food products that have made New England famous.

Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Patterson is not resting on her laurels from these very successful foundation activities. She is now working on what may well be her most ambitious project. It is called Open House, U.S.A., a concept she gave to the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, which adopted it as part of the official planning for the Nation's birthday.

Open House, U.S.A. is seeking support from prominent Americans in starting hospitality campaigns all over the Nation, through State and city government leaders, service organizations, and individuals in inviting and sponsoring the visits of foreign nationals to local observances of America's 200th birthday.

This, undoubtedly, will be the biggest people-to-people program ever devised and it is now Mrs. Patterson's dream project for the months ahead as the Nation prepares through pageants, community celebrations, and cultural events to celebrate its birthday in commemoration of the great events of 1776.

The support and help of all Americans will determine the success or failure of Open House, U.S.A. I join my colleagues in the House in wishing this new venture in international friendship and understanding the success that it deserves.