

Crossing the Loange  
By John M. Janzen and Larry B. Graber

I just finished reading a new book by two Pax men who went to the Congo 1957-59 (at the same time I was in Pax Europe). They are John M. Janzen from KS and Larry B. Graber from OR. The title is Crossing the Loange -- Congo Pax Service and the Journey Home. Its publishing date is 2016. It is large, 8.5 by 11 inches and 237 pages printed on glossy white paper. It consists mainly of letters John and Larry wrote home regularly to their parents who kept them. There are scores of photos many of them in color.

They served with Congo Inland Mission, building, repairing, teaching, and assisting missionaries and doctors. I was somewhat surprised at their comfortable living arrangements and accommodations of the CIM personnel. They of course suffered hardships of various sorts the two years too. They are observant and interested in the culture of the African clans they encounter. This was in the era of great unrest on the African continent and movements for independence. It is interesting to note that these Pax guys were thinking that the natives may be too impatient and not aware of the benefits they receive from the colonists, although they agreed that national independence was coming and saw exploitation everywhere. Most of their time in Africa was spent in rural and out of the way places where political movements were less visible. But they went to cities on business too. Because they were trustworthy, much of the time they were on their own in assignments with little supervision. My impression is these were two young men with high standards, conditioned by family and church, ethical and hard working and with great motivation. A Christian witness, and true "service in the national (and world) interest in lieu of the military." They at times took risks as youth tend to do.

The last third or so of the book tells the tales of their Sept. to Dec. 1959 travel home by their Citroen car, and by ship; to East Africa, Egypt, Lebanon, Jerusalem, other Near East countries, Greece, Austria, Germany, Italy, Paris, Brussels, N. Europe, across to London, then sail home from South Hampton. They often sleep in their car, and whenever possible visit or stay at MCC or Pax locations. Being used to Congo climate they didn't bring enough warm clothes. They knew more what to expect in Europe and found it more like home, so conclude that the African and Asian portions of their trip were the best. They both have returned to Europe and other overseas places many times, after Pax. One question I have is how they managed to fly straight home from New York, without stopping at Akron for debriefing which I and I thought all MCC workers did en route home.

A word about the authors from page 232: Larry Graber, who I know, is from Dallas, OR, has a B.A. from Willamette U., an MSW from U. of Utah, worked in Family Therapy, was Manager of Family Based Services for the State of Oregon. Since retirement he and his wife Karen have volunteered in over 30 overseas projects. Larry was a speaker at our 2002 OR Pax conference.

John Janzen was from Newton, KS, has a B.A. from Bethel, and a Ph.D. in anthropology from the U. of Chicago. He is an author and taught for 45 years at KS U. and other places. They both credit Pax with influencing their career choices. And both have children and grandchildren to whom this book is dedicated.

We are indebted to Larry and John for writing this gem. Anyone who served in Pax or MCC will find it fascinating reading. And many others will too.

Ray Kauffman  
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