

You go through a packed five months with twenty kids. You see them every day - at times you've yearned for a few new faces in the mob and thought of home. You've had unreasonable moments. You've come up against the will of the next guy and learned the extent of your own. You've rubbed elbows with a general's daughter and travelled the same road with the son of a school-teacher. Above all things you've stuck together.

Then you hear that five must leave and you realize how much you care. Five intense months with twenty kids - the damndest assortment of characters this side of the Equator - and somehow they've screwed their way right into your heart.

It's been a trip of the kind you've never thought would happen to you - the kind some guys would write a book about. You've seen America as few people have - from the mighty frameworks of her greatest cities down through the mass of little men who give her heart and motion. You've shaken hands you never expected to see. You've discovered the unmined strength of a whole people behind the shingles and the stucco of hundreds of open homes.

You've felt the pulse of America in thousands of average school kids and you've produced together to fill their hunger for action.

You've grown to love a nation more than ever you thought you could and your passion for her true destiny has grown with each mile. You've had the breath knocked out of you at the magnificence of this land - Briton, American, and Canadian alike. Patriotism? It didn't ring a bell before, but in five months you've learned together what the real McCoy is.

Wherever you're from, you're at ease under pine tree or palm, in sun or slush. It's nothing to spend most of the day in the backseat, and you'd miss the smell of the station-wagon. The word "hamburger" has taken on a very special meaning, and sleep? - well, you'll never have to be coaxed to bed again.

You've laughed and cried together - both in large doses that have matched the fullness of your living. As you've seen the ups and downs around you, you've understood because you've been on the roller coaster yourself. You've wisecracked and you've fooled on God's time, and then you've seen and heard and read things that have quickened your speed. Your blade has been sharpened by the urgency of the day you live in.

You've been at times petty, self-important, lazy, willful, and short-sighted and you'd like to eat some of your mistakes. You've heard your knees knock and felt your stomach sink - but you've given the Devil a powerful body-blow through the strength of a united punch.

In all things God has been abundant and it's hard to express your gratitude for the privilege of spending five months with the man raised up to set the new pace - and two hundred of his family.

You've taken a play from a barn playhouse to plush-seated theatres, auditoriums and schools - from the Great Lakes to the Pacific. You've placed your bet on a rising generation and you've felt it respond beyond your dreams. Your promise for the future is great.

And all those things you instinctively attach to the twenty kids who have moved at your side against all odds. It's never happened before and it'll never happen quite this way again. The pace has been set for another twenty, another two hundred, and what has been done will be done far better. But the twenty who broke the trail will never forget this venture together, nor will 37,000 others who've heard what they have to say.