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The Aunt Daisy Story

(continued from previous page)

door, become locked in the ladies' room adjacent to the studio. While a locksmith was being fetched, one of the studio technicians told her not to worry. "I'll bring you the microphone in the morning," he said, "and you can do your session quite well through the door. You just make yourself as happy as you can." However, the locksmith arrived, and Aunt Daisy escaped the fate of the unfortunate women of the popular song who stayed locked in from Monday to Saturday.

By cutting her engagements Aunt Daisy has not altogether relieved the pressure. "It's terrible," she says. "Well — no — not terrible; it's very interesting." But there aren't nearly enough hours in the day." She manages to keep most week nights free, however, going early to bed and saving her energies for a night out on Saturdays. Usually she attends a play or orchestral concert; sometimes a film. "I go to any picture that I know is good," she says. "I liked *To Catch a Thief*. But I don't like horrors! I don't like anything horrible! Or things that are advertised as *stark*. I can't bear them. And I can't bear anything that's 'For Adults Only.' Rotten! I don't like them at all.

"The picture which gave me most delight lately was a preview of the film about the Royal Tour of France. The Governor-General and the French Minister were there. It showed not only the Queen and the Prince arriving everywhere as we saw in the Queen's tour, but all the pageants, with soldiers dressed in the times of Napoleon when we were fighting the French."

ONLY once since the war has Aunt Daisy herself travelled abroad. In 1946 she returned to the United States for a lecture tour she had been invited to undertake during her wartime visit. One of the highlights was an address to the Chautauqua Institution, a summer school conducted at a village on the shores of Lake Chautauqua, in New York State. The audience was immense.

"The organist played 'Daisy Bell,'" says Aunt Daisy, "and I came on stage and said, 'Good morning, everybody,' and they all replied, 'Good morning, Aunt Daisy.' They joined in right through, and I had them pronouncing Paekakariki and Whangamomona, and Wairakei and Ruapehu and pohutukawa. They all leaned forward and co-operated. It was like playing the notes on a piano.

"I told them too about the tui and the bellbird and the kiwi, and how the male kiwi has to sit on the eggs for 75 days. I'd got going by that time. And I told them about Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers, and the mountains all behind and I contrasted it. That was God's world; that was just peace and purity. And what do we do? We turn our backs on all that and we burn coffee and dump foods and drop atom bombs! When I said that they burst into applause. I couldn't go on for a long time. They really loved that. People surged around me afterwards and it was just like being in the Wellington Town Hall or on the Friendly Road. I was leaning over waiting to shake hands with everybody. And one woman said, 'Are you a missionary?' And I said, 'Well . . . I'm not . . . no.'"

At Detroit, Aunt Daisy was driven out one day to Dearborn Field for the 83rd birthday celebrations of Henry Ford, the famed "Flivver King," whose



FREDERICK BASHAM

fortune was originally built by his 15,000,000 Model Ts, and whose historic importance remains as the inventor of the economic notion known as Mass Production. "He was very shaky and they shepherded him carefully," says Aunt Daisy. "I didn't actually meet him. The celebration was a big one, with thousands of people, and it ended with fireworks in the evening."

Later, in Toronto, Aunt Daisy produced a letter of introduction from the Bishop of Wellington to gain for herself a coveted seat in St. James' Cathedral. The service was being conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury, also on a visit to Canada. "I was right on the end of a pew on the centre aisle," she says, "where I could see everything." The tour ended with a journey to Canada's National Park area as a guest of Canadian Pacific Railways.

THE following years were to be sad ones for Aunt Daisy. "Dad was tired," she says, "and one Saturday he finally stayed in bed. I was so glad and so thankful, because he never would. On Sunday, as usual, I took him a cup of tea in bed. The spoon tinkled in the saucer as I took it down, and we had a little family joke about that. A man on the run from the police hid in a hamper outside a crockery shop. When the police began rattling and moving the baskets, he said 'Tinkle, tinkle,' and the police moved on. So, when I took in the cup of tea, I said 'Tinkle, tinkle.' Then I heard a funny sort of breathing. Dad had had a cerebral haemorrhage. He was quite unconscious and was taken to hospital.

"Next day I rang Mr Mackay, an old friend from the Friendly Road days, and told him I thought of going on working. He said that I should if I felt able. There was no use just sitting around waiting for the hospital to ring. So I went on the air just as usual."

Frederick Basham died on Friday, the 3rd of February, 1950. Aunt Daisy was off the air only on the following Monday. "I do find it better to go on with your work as soon as you can," she says. "If you don't you're only dwelling on your own troubles, being selfish, and pitying yourself. That's no good; no good to anybody."

When her second son Geoffrey died five years later, also of cerebral haemorrhage, Aunt Daisy followed this same stringent rule. She is one of this world's battlers; a small, determined figure who refuses to see in personal misfortune reason either to doubt her faith in an omnipotent God, or to doubt the faith God gave her in herself.

(To be concluded)

N.Z. LISTENER, SEPTEMBER 27, 1957.