

# Herbert Hoover's Notable Career

By CLAUDE R. COOK

Iowa has been proud to again honor its most distinguished citizen, Herbert Clark Hoover. The remarkable gathering of thousands of Hawkeye people, mingling with admirers of the former president of the United States from other commonwealths, including Governor Stratton of Illinois, at West Branch, adjacent the humble birthplace of President Hoover, on August 10, attested both their esteem and admiration of his life record, his abilities and his attainments.

In fact, Iowa should be and is thankful to Mr. Hoover for having brought to this state the distinction of claiming as its native son one of the most useful citizens, not only of Iowa, but of America and of the world. For Mr. Hoover is, indeed, a world citizen. He has had as many honors conferred upon him as probably ever came to one man in a single lifetime. From the days after leaving Stanford University, having graduated in the first class of that then young institution of learning, and his entrance into Australia as a mining engineer, he has forged one of the most distinguished trails of achievement in the field of engineering that one can imagine.

His fame as an engineer began even while a student at Stanford, when he worked during the vacation periods in the mines in the Sierra mountains and became a regular miner—a boy-man with pick and shovel, working long hours underground or sometimes on the surface about the plant, but he always had his eyes open and always he was learning. He preferred the underground work because he wanted first to know more about the actual occurrence of the ore in the earth than about the mill processes of extracting the mineral from it. Because of his application, his insight, and his insatiable desire for knowledge, he soon became a gang foreman.

When he was only twenty-four years old, he already had a large reputation in mining circles in Australia and London with a salary to correspond, and he could have gone on among Australian mines for as many years as he liked, for the big men in London now realized that they had in this young American engineer the unusual man and that his only limit in Australia would be the limit to the possibilities, but new opportunities and new experiences were calling.

Just about this time a young Chinaman of royal family in Peking had formed a cabinet for the first time in the history of China and this cabinet decided, naturally also for the first time in the history of China, to effect a co-ordinated control of all the mines in the empire. A department of mines was established, with a wily old Chinaman named Chang Yen Mow at its head. Yen Mow had the idea that a foreigner attached as an official to his department could be of particular help to him in dealing with other foreigners inclined to exploit Chinese mines for their own benefit. Such official was to be in a position much like that of an undersecretary in a cabinet department and was to be given the title in the Chinese equivalent of director. He was to have a salary appropriate to such a large title.

#### SOUGHT BY OFFICIALS OF CHINA

It only remained to find the proper foreigner who should know about mines and was honest. There was, as we know, just such a man in western Australia. His name was Herbert Hoover. Thus Chang was brought into contact with a great London mining man, Mr. Hoover, and he was brought to China, offered the place and the competent and confident youth of twenty-four, always ready for the newer and bigger thing, promptly accepted it.

After returning to San Francisco and spending a few days getting affairs in shape, he was off again for his second start to the far-away lands from which the loudest call seemed to come. Let us remember now that this was the beginning of the year 1899,

when Mr. Hoover was not yet twenty-five years old, in fact not that by half a year and he already had a record of achievement and a position in his hands of much responsibility and a large salary. So here he declared that the time had come for his carrying out of a decision he had made in his college days of four years before. It was that of marrying the girl in the geology department, Lou Henry.

He arrived in San Francisco on the 1st day of February, 1899, and spent a few days in Monterey, the old Pacific capitol of Stevenson's charming sketch, where Lou Henry lived, and here they were married at noon on Friday, February 10. At two o'clock they left for San Francisco and at noon the next day sailed for the Empire of China. It can be stated without the slightest objection from Mr. Hoover that much of his success through the following years was due to the inspiration and close and lovely companionship which he and Mrs. Hoover enjoyed.

The almost astronomical achievements and successes which came to Mr. Hoover could probably never be understood by the people in the Pacific capitol, but Monterey now displays a very just pride alongside of West Branch and Iowa in having been the home town of the woman who played such an active role in the career of her distinguished husband.

Not the least of their contributions to the world were the fine sons born to this distinguished couple. It has been the privilege of Mr. Hoover to witness the advances they have made. Herbert Hoover, Jr., has been one of the chief personalities engaged in bringing about the settlement of the oil dispute in Iran which has world-wide implications. Herbert Jr. has made some fourteen trips back and forth from America to Iran in this momentous settlement bringing about one of the most important diplomatic achievements of our time. As a result of this outstanding service, Herbert Jr. has been appointed under Secretary of State by President Eisenhower, and he was unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate.

## OPPORTUNITY COMBINED WITH ABILITY

It is a far cry from August 10, 1874, when Herbert Clark Hoover was born in the humble Iowa home, seven feet wide and thirteen and a half feet long. Eighty years is a long time measured merely in years. It is an achievement in itself to have lived that long. But eighty years becomes far too small a container into which to compress the deeds and achievements of this Iowa boy born eight decades ago at West Branch. No author or poet ever dreamed of a more romantic story or poem than has actually been experienced by Herbert Hoover. It is one of the great romances of American opportunity and it would tax beyond possibility the combined efforts of the stage, screen, radio and television, to construct a script that would equal the breadth and scope of the life of this great man.

Of Herbert Hoover it may truthfully be said, "He really is one of the world's great citizens," beloved by men of all races and creeds and of all nations, the latter of nearly every one of which has been visited by him. His life, beginning in the small Iowa town is truly indicative of the great fact that a man does not have to be born in a great city, in a palace or a mansion to become a world citizen and a useful member of society. The alibis Herbert Hoover could have used for not being successful were legion, and yet he never resorted to a single one of them. With his advent to life just a little over a hundred miles from the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln, it is not fanciful to suggest that Hoover's contributions to the world in his time in a degree approached that of the Great Liberator, being greatly afforded by his world contacts and personal achievements, perhaps not rivaled by any other American citizen.

He came of the sturdiest of stocks, the Quakers, who believed in the worship of God and in the integrity of mankind. Instilled in him were those early ideas of honesty and industry, from which he has never departed.

## RECALLS HIS BOYHOOD

His boyhood was as interesting, to listen to his own narration of it, as that of any boy who has ever had the privilege of being born in this great state and nation. It was into a humble and modest and sincere family, and looking back on it today, one could almost assume that he opened his eyes upon a great land of opportunity and that the rich heritage which was his has never been forgotten and almost every movement he has ever made, he has made keeping all of this in his mind and in his background.

In his address which Mr. Hoover made before the Iowa Association of Southern Californias at Long Beach, California, nine years ago, he gave a picture of his home state as viewed "through the eyes of a ten year old boy." He recalled Cook's Hill, a great long hill where on winter nights they used to slide down at a terrific speed with their tummies tight to home-made sleds. It is still a fairly good-sized hill, but he observed that the method of thawing out frozen toes with ice water is now obsolete. He recalled the swimming hole, under the willows down by the railroad bridge, but lamented that youngsters who swam in it in 1945 were required by their mothers to take a bath to get rid of the mud when they came home.

His boyhood days were enhanced by the sport of trapping rabbits in cracker box traps, held open by a figure four. He recalls that one of the bitterest days of his life was in connection with a rabbit. It seems his older brother had surreptitiously read the *Youth's Companion*, behind the blacksmith shop and this article contained full directions for rendering live rabbits secure. He stated that the word "surreptitiously" was used for his was a Quaker family, unwilling in those days to have youth corrupted with stronger reading than the Bible, the encyclopedia or those great novels where the hero overcomes the demon rum. Soon after his brother had acquired this higher learning on rabbits, "he proceeded to instruct me to stand still in the cold snow and hold up the rabbit by its hind feet,

while with his not over sharp knife, he proposed to puncture two holes between the sinews and back-knee joints of the rabbit, through which holes he proposed to tie a string and thus arrive at complete security." But he stated that the resistance of the rabbit was too much for him and he was blamed all the way home and for weeks afterwards, and even continuously for over fifty years for permitting the rabbit to get away. He dryly observed that he thought he would write the *Youth's Companion* and suggest that they make sure that this method is altered.

As a boy he hunted prairie chickens in the hedges with sling shots and arrows and sometimes was able to bring down a chicken. And he admits that occasionally there may have been unavoidable mistakes by confusing barnyard chickens with the wild ones. Fishing for sunfish and cat-fish with a willow pole and a butcher string line and hooks, ten for a dime, were part of his sport. And he lived at a time, he stated, when fish used to bite instead of strike and they knew it when the cork bobbed. The preferred bait was an angleworm upon which the endowed supernatural powers of allurements were conferred by spitting upon the worm. Having been all over the world and eaten some of the very best food and also some of the very worst, he was still of the opinion that his Aunt Milly was the best cook of them all.

The Burlington railroad track was ballasted with glacial gravels where you discovered gems of agate and fossil coral. When polished on the grindstone, their fine points came out wonderfully when wet and you had to lick them with your tongue before each exhibit.

As a boy, he grew up through that period when proper chores for children outside their school hours were considered part of their training. Planting corn, hoeing gardens, learning to milk, sawing wood and the other proper and normal occupations for boys were the rule of that day.

And it might be observed here in passing, as we

think back upon the experiences of this man and as we are seeking in this day to solve the problem of juvenile delinquency, that this might be the proper solution and answer. Everyone is against factory and labor in sweat shops for children, but the boy or the girl, even in this day and generation, who has some responsibilities, some tasks to perform each day is the least likely to be found in trouble. We might do very well to re-examine some of our laws and regulations which prevail today, which prohibit to a very large degree the honest and gainful and helpful employment of boys and girls growing up which would teach them the value of money, the conservation of time and the application of their lives to useful and gainful pursuit.

He received one cent a hundred for potato bugs and if you wanted fire crackers you took it or left it. They were not allowed to have a union of potato bug pickers. When he was six years old, he recalls the torch-light parade in the Garfield campaign of 1880. He was too young to be allowed out but he did see the lamps being filled and lighted. He recalls there was no great need for urging the voters in the village, for there was just one Democrat in the town, an addict of demon rum. He represented all the forces of evil. But at times he lapsed in goodness in the form of rations of gum drops here and there and he also bought the old iron for which extra money was provided for fire crackers on the fourth of July. Therefore he was tolerated and he served efficiently as a moral and political lesson.

Young Hoover's father died when he was six years old and his mother passed away three years later, leaving him an orphan at nine. After about a year his migration to the Oregon territory took place. In spite of all the misfortunes and the poverties early in life, he graduated as an engineer. It was after a short time with the U. S. Geological Survey and in the mines in the United States, he went to Australia to begin an extraordinary career as a mining engineer

in Asia, Europe, Africa and America, and became a millionaire early in life. While working as chief engineer of the Imperial Mines in China in 1900, he became food administrator for refugees of the Boxer Rebellion and that was the beginning of another extraordinary career in the field of relief.

#### GAVE AWAY OFFICIAL SALARIES

It is significant to note that with his great ability and knowledge as a geologist and as a mining engineer, and his association with the greatest leaders of the world of his time, he obtained unparalleled experience as well as enormous income and then became recognized as one of the world's greatest humanitarians. As president of the United States elected in 1928, he never kept the salary of the president. This was true in all of the public offices he held; under his direction, the salaries were either given to charities or to underpaid officials. But this affords only a slight glimpse into the humanitarian impulses which brought him as great fame as might well come to any individual. During World War I, he was the food administrator and earned the eternal gratitude of European nations for the distribution of food and clothing to people devastated by the ravages of war. His services as administrator of Belgium relief perhaps have no parallel in history and the monument erected in the West Branch Hoover park, with money raised by children from Belgium is a lasting memorial of the gratitude of the Belgian people.

All are familiar with his service as chairman of several important relief projects in America to aid war victims. He was United States Food Administrator from 1917 to 1919. Again in 1946, he became President Truman's Relief Coordinator of the European program. He served as Secretary of Commerce in the cabinets of Presidents Harding and Coolidge and was elected as President of the United States in 1928. While president he initiated the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and the Hoover dam project. He supported the Farm Loan Bank, Home Loan Banks and the Agri-



culture Credit Corporation, but they were not enacted into law during his administration. In 1948, he was appointed chairman of the Committee of Reorganization of the U.S. Executive Departments. And, at the request of President Eisenhower, he is now serving as a member of The New Hoover Commission on Government Operations.

#### WAR AFTERMATH CONFRONTED

But, even the great and honest cannot escape the calumny of selfish foes. After being elected President of the United States, following a successful reorganization of the Department of Commerce of the United States, crowning all of the other achievements which he had contributed for the benefit not only of the United States but other nations of the world, there came the inevitable opposition that always confronts success. There were the smear campaigns; there were the misrepresentations of facts; there were the slanders springing from politically selfish motives hurled at him.

Hoover inherited the aftermath of World War I, when the currency of almost every European nation had declined, much of it to the vanishing point. Like a tidal wave, the broken economies of war-devastated Europe began to have their effect upon the London and New York money markets. Mr. Hoover commandeered all of the resources available to try and stop this on-rushing tide, yet he met opposition even in his own political party, but more devastating from his political opponents.

As a result of the fallen foreign economies, it was inevitable that the great depression of the '29 and '30's would need to be dealt with. Political opposition prevented his seeing, during his administration the solution to these problems. One of the greatest slanders perhaps ever hurled at anyone was the charge that during all of this trying period the president of the United States sat in the White House and did nothing. Anyone who ever believed that should read the history of that period, the history of the activities of Mr. Hoover

as president in undertaking to get together the men who might have provided a solution.

Herbert Hoover's successor, elected in the November elections of 1932, absolutely refused to confer with him to stave off what Mr. Hoover well knew would be the greatest banking depression of the history of America. All his efforts at bringing together such a conference were turned aside and upon accession to the presidency, his successor set about putting into motion the very ideas Mr. Hoover had promulgated, and had they been adopted earlier this great period in American history might well have taken a different and a better turn.

However, it has been real achievements that have made Mr. Hoover the distinguished citizen of whom Iowa is very definitely proud. And, perhaps most of all, the one great factor that has made him the beloved citizen he is today, the elder statesman of the United States, is the inherent modesty and honesty and his unimpeachable integrity. It has been his great good fortune to outlive all of the opposition and to enjoy the life of a man of the highest of ideals and at eighty years to attain a philosophy of living which could well be the goal of every American citizen.

Mr. Hoover now enjoys the confidence of all men regardless of political affiliation. He came to West Branch as the guest of Iowa, the guest of Iowa people who enjoyed the privilege of commemorating his eightieth birthday in a great birthday party, and warmly greeted by Governor Beardsley and other speakers. No native son has ever scaled greater heights, surpassed in notable achievement, engaged in wider services to mankind the world over than this man. May he enjoy many more years of happiness and contentment.

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