INDEX TO TAPE OF FLORENCE PALMER

This is a recording of the experiences and reminiscences of Florence Palmer, retired missionary from India. The interviewer is Betty Turnell, and the narrator is Miss Palmer. The recording is made at the request of the United Methodist Women at the First United Methodist Church at Decatur, Illinois, at the home of Miss Palmer, Apt. 4, 225 W. William Street in Decatur on May 19, 1983.

Betty: Miss Palmer, I'm going to call you "Florence" because we are good friends. Florence, can you tell us something about your experiences as a missionary in India?

Florence: I would be happy to. Perhaps you, too, have the question in mind, "How did you happen to go to India to become a missionary in the first place?"

It was not just a "happening;" even a traumatic experience! It was more like the unfolding of a dream! From the early background of missionary education in the Methodist Church at Carthage, Illinois, where there were mission study groups for all ages, and particularly the Standard Bearers of high school ages, interest grew. The Standard Bearers were supporting a Bible woman in India. Our church supported a missionary couple serving in India; also a single lady, member of the church, became a missionary to India. When these missionaries came home on furlough, they made India come alive! So India was the first country I thought of as my goal for missionary service.

After teaching four years in Decatur and after acceptance through the regular channels for missionary service, the time for departure came in October, 1930. Thirteen new missionaries with three older missionaries returning from furlough left New York together; only four of us with the three older missionaries were together all the way to India. On the 28th day after leaving New York we were awakened in the early morning hours by all the excitement of sighting the coastline of India. As the ship approached the harbor, the eastern sky became a blaze of colors blended into a fiery red as the sun began to rise-- palm trees in silhouette against that eastern sky. THIS WAS REALLY INDIA !

At that time the fastest train going up-country met the ship at the harbor. The American Express took care of the luggage, and we were soon settled into a second class women's compartment, and on our way! What an exciting eight hours from Bombay to Baroda, about 300 miles. I and two of the older missionaries were the only ones of our group on this train to Baroda. The day soon passed into evening, as it was first on one side and then to the other all day, to watch the passing scenes of people, animals, fields, villages and mud huts; then the vendors with hot tea, fruits, snacks, who ran up and down the train each time it stopped. In the early evening Baroda Station came into view. The Annual Conference was in session in Baroda; therefore, a large group had come to the station to meet this new missionary. All I could say was, "Salaam-Salaam." I was soon whisked off in a car to the bungalow, where several of the teachers were waiting to dress me in a bright colored saree and put bangles on my arms! And we were on our way to the District Superintendent's house where a real Gujarati dinner was served to all the Conference members.

Sitting on the floor (pillows for me), we were soon served on a leaf plate, a sweet ball, rice and curry hot with spices, but good; there was no silverware; we ate with our fingers! Someone pushed a banana over to me--nice and cooling after hot spices!

The second day was the reception for the Bishop, with the special entertainment being a ride on this huge elephant. What an experience, to climb up onto the platform with our feet hanging over the edge, ducking our heads to avoid the tree branches, we were swaying in a rhythm reminding me of the recent ocean waves! I was ready to get down after the five-minute ride.

The Conference business sessions were interesting--but when would I ever be able to understand the language? The appointments always came at the close of the last session of conference. I heard my appointment to read, "Appointed to language study." Language School began the next week--an Interdenominational School for all new missionaries within the State of Gujarat. In addition to the regular classes, individual lessons with Indian pundits in the early morning and again in the evening hours kept us busy. I became aware of the fact that the grammatical structure was almost identical to that of Latin! Eight years of Latin study plus four years of teaching Latin gave a wonderful background and foundation for the Gujarati language, but pronunciation is always a problem.

There were many teachers--while playing badminton with the teachers, or walking with some of the girls, visiting in the homes, etc.--all eager to hear me speak in Gujarti! After regular oral and written exams, I began the second year of study together with appointment to part-time work in the villages. The first visits to the villages were most interesting, for here is where the greater number of population lived and still do today. This was real India: people, dogs, mud huts with doors opening out onto the dusty road--all most interesting, but also very frustrating because of the language. No one else in the village spoke English--I had to make an effort to express myself. I began to write out what I wanted to say to the women, as well as to the people in an evening meeting, and my Bible woman would listen to me, correcting my mistakes--a very patient teacher. Village responsibility meant visiting in the homes, inspecting the elementary schools under our supervision--and, to my dismay, giving attention to all the sick. I determined that a very necessary part of my equipment must be a medicine box. Our missionary doctor in Baroda prepared such a box, including a handbook of instructions for the common lay person. Malaria fever was always present, colds, sore eyes, all kinds of sores, aches and pains. For those who needed a doctor and hospital care I would write a note for them to take to one of the mission hospitals. The evening meetings were for showing pictures on the life of Christ, on various health problems, on child care and sanitation in general--this through the use of a "magic lantern", a pressure lamp with the necessary attachments--no electricity! It was not uncommon for the whole village to come together for these night meetings. It offered opportunity to distribute literature and Christian Gospel portions.

Among some of the most interesting and special privileges of village work, I would mention these in particular:

1. To visit in the homes of village leaders of high caste;

2. Contact with educational officers in the district, for they were responsible for visiting our mission schools and assessing government grants. All schools meeting the government standards of teacher qualifications, daily attendance, course of study, etc. received substantial grant-in-aid from the government. It was then necessary to have periodical teacher institutes.

   Village Women's Institute - The pastor or circuit dar having supervision over 10-12 villages, would be willing for them to come to a central village center for a week, as well as the willingness of the women. A group of 20 or 25 village women and the babies whom the fathers could not care for at home, would come to the circuit-center where a church building, a pastor's house, a well and usually an enclosed compound, were available. Here we were only women. A cook was hired and someone to care for the small babies, and the women had nothing else to do except to sit together for study, for craft work, for playing games and eating, and drawing the necessary water for daily use. They had never had such an opportunity before! They could now sit with their faces open and sing and recite! Eager to learn, they had good memories.

3. Institutes for village pastors and their wives -- always teaching!

   Adult Literacy was introduced, first time a slate pen in hand to write what they saw on the chart! Most of them could at least write their names before they went home; they would take a colorful picture to hang on the mud wall, or perhaps a paper cross which would help them remember their daily prayers! But most of all, their enthusiasm to learn, which was evident to their husbands, and sometimes when we met they would ask when their wives would be called to the next school!

   Sometimes classes for continued Adult Literacy were arranged where women of several villages could come together. The government gave the incentive for Adult Literacy classes by offering a substantial bonus in salary to the regular school teachers, based upon the number of women passing a government exam! Can you imagine what joy and pride a newly literate woman would have as she stood before a gathering reading aloud whatever her assignment might be!

4. Institutes for recognized village leaders among the women, even though they were illiterate! We gave them several copies of the Bible to add to their library in the ashram.
   Their leader had renounced idol worship and had even broken down idols of a Hindu temple in which he himself had been the priest! Premal Maharaj and several followers read the Bible through and especially the New Testament several times! Whenever we itinerated in that area we had opportunity to meet with them in their ashram and discuss together some of their questions concerning the Christian faith.

5. The Vishva Dharma Niketan (an ashram of the World Religion) offered a unique opportunity to become aware of the trend among a few high caste Hindus, toward modern Hinduism. A group of young Hindu men, sometimes their wives also, began searching the scriptures of some of the main religions such as Hinduism, the Moslem

religion or Islam, Parsee, and now the Christian religion and for the first time began reading the Bible.

6. The last three years of service in India, before returning to the U.S.A. for retirement gave me a very different challenge. Through the years I had recognized the need for bringing together educated young Christian women who were already serving the church in various ways, to give them opportunity for an interchange of thoughts and study and perhaps more specific study. So, a program for Women's Leadership Training in various areas of India was prepared by a Central Committee for the All-India Women's Work Committee of the Central Conference in India. Women leaders of other than Methodist Church were added to the central committee.

   India was divided into four areas. This meant several different languages; therefore, we planned for only those women who could speak and read fluently in English would be invited to these seminars. Through correspondence with the different denominational leaders in a particular area, a list of women was made and a location for 30-35 women was chosen, usually where a college or at least high school would offer the convenience for lodging and food. The staff for these seminars were for the most part college professors who gave their services for that particular time. There were discussion periods when each one freely expressed her own opinions and ideas. Among the subjects chosen were: Comparative Religions (basic ideas), Bible Study, Evangelism, Women's opportunity for service within her own church.

   Four such seminars were held, and from reports received, some areas held similar seminars for women in their own areas. As many of the women expressed: "This was just like having a refresher college course!" And so it proved to be most worthwhile.

As time for my departure from India drew near, it was necessary to find an Indian woman who could continue in this kind of leadership. One such was found, most capable and experienced from her years of being principal of a high school, then of an inter-mediate college and teacher training department, and as a member of several All-India Boards. Because it would be an All-India appointment, she received the necessary approval of the College of Bishops in India and received her appointment.

This program still continues, though in a somewhat different pattern.

This is only a glimpse of some of my experiences during the thirty-eight years of service in India.

Betty: Florence, that was a fascinating account of your experiences in India, and I'm sure that everyone will agree that you did a tremendous service not only for the church and for the people of India, but we imagine that you probably got quite a good deal out of it yourself.

Florence: I often say that we really get more ourselves than we think we are giving to the people. It's so rewarding to have the privilege of being in the midst of another culture and learning with them.

Betty: It's nice to have something of that sort work both ways. We really admire you and appreciate what you did.

Now, as one of your listeners to this account, I have a few questions which I wonder if you would answer. These are little follow-up points, because we know that country is so big and so different from the United States that I'm sure everyone has questions about India.

Going back to your early experience, when you first decided to go there, I wonder what the reaction of your family was?

Florence: They naturally thought of India as being away over there on the other side of the world. And so they were really not too happy about my going. However, they made no objection whatever, so I felt perfectly free in continuing my plan and desire to go to India. In fact, they took me to the New York harbor. We were together on the ship. They met me at the time of my first furlough, and from then on, when they realized I was still just a person when I came home on furlough, it didn't make any difference.

Betty: When they saw that things were working out very well for you?

Florence: When I was still like a human being, I think they thought I would be quite different when I came home. I don't know really what they expected.

Betty: Of course, as you said, you taught four years before you went so you weren't exactly a teenager when you left.

Florence: I did teach four years. Then at that time you had to be 25 years of age before you could be accepted. I did teach until I was 26 when I went out to India.

Betty: By then you were quite mature in your thinking, and your family realized that you really knew what you were doing.

Did you have to have any special training in this country before you went to India? You said you had a training period after you got there.

Florence: We did not have to have any particular training before we left. We were supposed to be college graduates. This was one requirement of the Board of Missions. There was no specific training as far as special subjects were concerned. They encouraged us to think of special training after we had been in the field and had come home on furlough. This is where we would take a year of special training. For instance, on my first furlough I began on my master's degree in Christian education. I started at Garrett Theological School in Evanston, which also gave opportunity to have some educational courses at Northwestern.

Betty: How long were these furloughs?

Florence: That depended. The normal furlough is one year. During the wartime it had to be whenever a ship was available that would take women, but the normal period would be one year.

Betty: You did yet your master's degree?

Florence: Not during the first furlough. But Northwestern and Garrett were willing to hold over the previous studies, and Scarritt College in Nashville, Tennessee, accepted the credits which Northwestern and Garrett had given, so I got my master's degree from Scarritt College in Nashville.

Betty: Very good! You told us where you were stationed in India, but India is such a big country, I don't think you told us where it is. Could you tell us something about the location?

Florence: The whole country of India is divided into perhaps 25 native states today, one of which is Gujarat. Baroda is one of the larger cities within this smaller state of Gujarat. It's located 300 miles north of Bombay, along the western coast.

Betty: What was the climate there?

Florence: We were in a temperate climate. However, that meant that your summer weather could be as hot as 120 degrees and the winter time cold weather could be 50 or 60 degrees because there was no central heat -- no heat except the sun. When it was too cold and damp for the school children to sit in an enclosed building, they would go out and sit under the trees, where it was so much more comfortable outside.

Betty: Did you have any health problems there?

Florence: I was one of the very fortunate ones. I did have a bout or two of malaria, which was so very common at that time. Now, it's very seldom even heard of. They have done a wonderful job of eradicating malaria, smallpox, and some of those earlier terrible diseases that India was raging with. I can remember when I was filling in as hostel superintendent during one period when a missionary was home for health reasons. We would have a room full of 20 or 25 girls, all with high, high fevers. At that time the best remedy was just to keep them wrapped in cold cloths. That kept a number of people busy all the time, trying to bring their fevers down.

Betty: It sounds as if you needed a short course in medicine to help these people!

Florence: I soon found that out in India. I think the common opinion at least among the village people was that anyone with a white skin ought to be able to heal or to tell what was wrong with a sick person.

Betty: Should be a doctor!

Florence: A doctor or a nurse.

Betty: You talked a bit about language. Now, this language you learned and became fluent in was only one of the languages of India?

Florence: This is what makes India so divided in its people and forms of government. The culture also is quite different. India does have 15 major

languages. Each one of the major languages could be divided into hundreds of dialects that are spoken by people far away in the villages. They have no contact with city people so they have a mixture of languages that becomes an unwritten language. For awhile I was working among the so-called "tribal peoples" -- the aborigines, so to speak, of India. Theirs was a grand mixture of Hindi, Gujarati, etc. It meant I always had to depend upon the pastor, who usually was with me in a village, to interpret for me.

Betty: You mentioned that English is the language used at these seminars. Is English a common language in India?

Florence: It was very common. All through those early years when the English were ruling India, that was their basic language in school. They began even down in the primary sections. So the older students in private schools, in colleges, all had a good basic foundation in English. However, there came a time when the national movement was so strong that English was forbidden in the schools, and therefore there has been that lapse through the years. But now there is a tendency to go back, and I think in most of the accredited schools English is again being taught in most of the lower standard schools.

Betty: You told us something of the people of India, but do you want to tell us more about your impressions of the people there?

Florence: One of my earlier impressions when I first began visiting in the village was that no people on earth could be more hospitable than the village people. All you had to do was just be patient with them. If you would go to the door and just make yourself known, a woman would be very skeptical until she would see who you were. When she recognized, which she did, the pastor and the Bible woman with me, each of whom could speak fluently, that was a point of getting closer to them. Then I think the thing that counts most, particularly in the villages among the people is if you accept a cup of tea or break off a little crust of the freshly baked bread, then you are one of the family. It didn't take me long to do that, because I liked tea, and I loved their village bread.

Betty: Then you were accepted?

Florence: Then I was really accepted.

Betty: You talked a little about the place of women in India. You talked about the seminars where the women could come <u>if</u> their husbands gave approval. That gives us a clue. How did most men regard women?

Florence: Of course, it's the man who is head of the household in the village or in the cities. So it's the men in the family who would have to take the responsibility for the women when the women would come to these institutes or seminars. This was not so true among the high caste women, who were educated and had taught in places of responsibility, but as far as the village women were concerned, once they had come to an institute and they had gone home and their husbands had seen the difference it had made in the openness of their women, they were very happy to have them called two or three times. It was difficult to give all of the village women, which was never quite possible, an opportunity to come to the village institutes. Now for the seminars that would be quite a different picture. These were educated women

in responsible positions, both in the church and many of them in government positions. So there was no question of their own opinions.

(END OF TAPE I -- TURN OVER CASSETTE)

TAPE II

Betty: Of course, we know from the fact that the prime minister of India is a woman that the educated women, the people at the top have privileges, which I'm sure the village women don't have. You talked about the women at these village meetings, saying they were so glad to have their faces "open," which tells us something about their ordinary life?

Florence: That's true, because if their husbands had been present, they would have had to cover their faces. This means just pulling their sari over their faces and, of course, with women just sitting together as women, they could be perfectly free. They didn't even have their sari over their heads. But the minute they go out of their own homes in a village where they live, they must have their heads and faces covered, partially, particularly if any men come directly toward them.

Betty: You mentioned that they dressed you Indian fashion. What kind of clothes did you wear most of the time?

Florence: Out in the villages, I very commonly wore a common sari, because it meant while speaking with the women, visiting in their homes, I would be sitting on the floor with the women. It would either be that or sitting on a low rope bed so you would need your legs covered. It would be very indecent in a village culture to expose your legs, especially up to your knees. So it was more convenient always to wear a sari where you would always be accepted, and you could easily move about on the floor with a sari on. You wouldn't have to be so particular about your legs.

Betty: They are beautiful in material and the flowing lines. Are they as comfortable as they look?

Florence: They really are comfortable, and I didn't even mind them during the hot, sticky weather. They seem to serve as a cooling effect. Gujarat is famous for its cotton saris because one of the main crops is cotton. So we have within the total state, I believe, a hundred and twenty or twenty-five cotton mills. Cotton is common in the shops, even in the villages. You can always buy lovely cotton saris.

Betty: You mentioned when you took your first train trip in India that you rode in a second class carriage. Does that show that there is a class distinction in India?

Florence: That's right. I know it's still true today. Where your train is one car after the other, one not connected with the other, there are three classes--first class, second class, and third class. There are compartments for just women in each of these classes. Third class means just hard board benches. There is where you meet the people, and often when I was traveling for a short time, I would have free conversation with the women as they would get on and off at the stations. Second class is for those who can afford the difference in price of your ticket. You would have leather-covered benches with a lower and upper berth. If

you were traveling overnight, you made your reservations for a second-class berth. First class is for those who can pay a still larger sum for their tickets. You have more convenience in the toilet arrangement. You can have a small coupé by yourself if you were riding first class in the women's compartment.

Betty: Did you notice much distinction in class in other places -- other than trains?

Florence: Of course, in the villages there is caste distinction everywhere. Our Christian work in the villages was commonly among the lower caste people, which meant that their houses were off to one side of the village. The caste groups perhaps would be divided by a road or a field into sections between the low and high castes. In a city it's not so distinguishable, but the difference between the low and high caste sections is there.

Betty: You mentioned the food. Was all the food you ate Indian, and did you like it?

Florence: I have always liked Indian food from that very first meal. It was not our practice to eat all the time with the village pastors. In one instance, it would mean that they would go to extra trouble and go to extra expense to give you special food. They wouldn't give you just their ordinary daily food. So it was our custom to take our grain and our vegetables with us and to do our own cooking as we traveled in the villages.

Betty: What kind of accommodations did you have for your day-to-day living?

Florence: In Baroda, which was one of our larger mission stations, single missionaries lived together in a large brick bungalow, where our bedrooms were on the top floor and offices and general living and eating arrangements were on the lower floor so that the one building served as office and place of residence as well. When I first went to India, there were four of us living in the bungalow together. It depends on how many missionaries there are to live in a station. The couples would have their own bungalow. The doctor and nurses had their own medical bungalow, which was attached to the hospital.

Betty: The "bungalow" came from India, didn't it?

Florence: I think it came from England, where the name "bungalow" is attached to a small house. I think it has to do with the pattern of a structure. I'm not quite sure where the word "bungalow" came from, but you never would hear the word "house" commonly spoken.

Betty: You talked a little about the religions in India. You used a word I'm not familiar with--"ashram." What does that mean?

Florence: An "ashram" really means a place of rest. So religious leaders have formed the pattern -- I'm not acquainted with the original idea of an ashram -- but it's a place apart from the daily life of the village or the city where they could go, and their followers could come and they could sit in quiet and meditate and have their prayers together. In the ashram in Janbusar, one of our larger circuit centers, there

was this very fine separate house where no one actually lived but where they came together for their study of the various religions. The real intent was for these young minds to cull from the Hindu religion, from the Moslem religion, from the Parsee religion, and from the Christian religion what they thought they could put together as a world religion where all peoples would accept the beliefs.

Betty: Did all religions accept so readily this inter-denominational situation? Did all of the religions contribute -- or just a few people? It sounds inter-denominational.

Florence: No, it really wasn't. It was just these few Hindu people who somewhere along the line had the vision of idol worship being wrong. A Hindu temple has so many terrible features. When I say that, I'm thinking of the sacrifices that a Hindu makes when he goes to certain temples. They are hideous, but it has always been a very important part of the Hindu religion. But here was a group of people who were beginning to feel that much of that was not a religion. It belonged in another category. One religious leader in particular had the courage to show this by demonstrating his own feelings. He tore down the idols that were in his own temple and worshiped, while still a Hindu, in a very modern view that accepted the beliefs of other people, not just those within the Hindu religion.

Betty: But this group was relatively small?

Florence: Yes, a small group. They probably took this from some of the principles of Mahatma Ghandi, who, of course, did not believe in caste distinctions of any kind. He himself was a high caste Hindu, but he never kept himself away from the low caste. In fact, it was through his efforts and public appearances, teaching, wherever he went, that all castes should be one. In his public meetings he would ask the low caste people to come to the front, and the high caste could go to the back of the gatherings in a village group.

Betty: He was really an inspiration to them.

Dlorence: He really was.

Betty: How strong are Christians in India?

Florence: The Christian group is considered among the minority. Considering the largest number, it is that of Hinduism. The second largest is the Moslem religion. The other religions -- Parsee, Jainism, Christianity, and many, many other branches of each of these are included among the minority. It is really a very small proportion of the total population of India. Among these, I think the Methodist Church has the largest number of Christians, and we certainly do have the largest number of outstanding Christian leaders, perhaps due to our very organization itself, which picks out leadership among the bishops. And then you have your district superintendents and then your circuit dars and then your pastors.

Betty: You mentioned a word which I believe is not in common use -- "itinerate." We could probably guess what it is, but maybe you could explain what that is.

Florence: "Itinerating" is a word very common in India. It means just moving about from one place to another. As a part of our responsibilities, each time we came home on furlough, we were obligated (but it also was a privilege) to itinerate -- to move around among all of the churches in a particular area, especially the area that was taking the greater responsibility for your support.

Betty: We know you had furloughs to come to the United States -- for study and some recreation and getting acquainted with your family again and all of that, but you did have some holidays or furloughs in India too, didn't you? Did you travel much there?

Florence: We did have opportunities because of the weather conditions. In the summertime, which would be the latter part of May, June, particularly, you would have very high temperatures--up to, say, 120° or so. That meant for continued study, for opportunity to meet with other groups, to attend conferences and things of this nature; after our regular language school, we would go to the mountain stations. A "station" would mean a whole town arrangement up in the mountains too high for a railway to reach the top where you lived, but you would go as high as the railway went and then get out and in some of the areas there would be roads for the buses to go farther than the train could go, but you would finally have to get out and walk the last little distance. That meant you had to put your luggage on the backs of coolies and you would finally arrive at your destination. During the summertime we would usually have one place where we would eat our food -- that was our boarding arrangement -- and then we would have small cottages where two or three would plan to spend the summer together. That is where we would live. If we wanted to do our own cooking, we would have that arrangement too.

Betty: So it was a recreation and rehabilitation from your regular duties?

Florence: That's right. We were supposed to have a month away from our station responsibility. This was one of the regulations. In fact, our Board of Missions was so insistent upon this that if we became ill, they would ask when we had had our last vacation. It was part of the total health measures to keep us healthy and well.

Betty: Very good! When you came back to the United States after your retirement, did you have any difficulty readjusting to life here?

Florence: Probably the greatest difficulty was just in learning to speak English! -- at least in the proper form. Of course, there were many changes during a period of five years, which was the normal time of service in the field -- a one-year furlough at home. Probably the greatest change was what had taken place commonly, even in transportation. Cars -- everybody had a car, all colors of the world! I can still remember my first impression -- of being up high in a hotel and looking down at a parking lot, I was amazed at the variety of colors of cars. Of course, that was just one little thing. I still love to go into a supermarket, and am amzaed at the food you can buy that

requires so little effort to have a meal, and I always enjoy picking out new products that are frozen to see what I can do with them.

Betty: Have you ever gone back to India since you retired?

Florence: No, I haven't. It's been in my thinking, but I haven't. One reason is financial, and then, too, the living conditions in India are quite different when a national woman is in charge of a whole bungalow. No more missionaries are there in Baroda, where I was living. It's a great strain, really, on them to take care of foreigners coming and going. Now, if you're in a larger city, like Bombay, Delhi, or Calcutta, there would be a different situation because there are tourist homes or vacation homes where you can go and pay a certain amount and have your food and lodging.

Betty: Do you keep in touch by letter or other means with the people you knew there?

Florence: I'm still making the effort, and we do exchange Gujarati letters, especially at Christmas time, and there are a few friends in Gujarati who still remember even my birthday. They are the ones who want to keep their touch with English, so they write me in English, and I usually try to answer them in Gujarti, in spite of the mistakes.

Betty: How does the United Methodist Church assist retired missionaries? They do make some provision, don't they?

Florence: Yes, they do -- and our Women's Division in particular has been very thoughtful all through the years in planning ahead for pensions for all retired missionaries and deaconesses. This means that they have an overall fund, the interest of which is used for the payment of pensions. The pensions are based on a set of regulations which the Women's Division made for us, according to the number of years you have spent. If you have spent at least 20 years, you have the privilege of retirement in one of our very fine retirement homes, one of which is located at Asheville, North Carolina. Where there are at present 150 or so (there may be more today) residents, and where there is complete availability of care you might need for the rest of your life. There is the residence hall which means you can live in one room and share the bath with the resident of the adjoining room. You have the privilege of the dining room plus alittle kitchenette plus a laundry, which can be done for you if you're not able to do it yourself. Or in Asheville we have the apartment arrangement, which is a separate unit though joined with the main building. Then I think one of the most convenient privileges we have is that of a full-fledged hospital, not with a resident doctor, but with resident nurses, and if you are not able to live in a room or apartment, you can have the privilege of living in the infirmary even though you may still be able to walk around and enjoy the privilege of outside activities that are regulated for your health purposes, but you still have the medical care night and day. You are under the supervision of nurses in the residence hall. If the night nurse might be walking along the hall and see your light on, she might knock on your door and ask if you are all right. So you feel that you have constant care there.

Betty: It's good to know that the church appreciates your service.

Florence: I was going to add that we do have another home in California, which is quite a different pattern, and I'm not so familiar with it since it has changed its pattern in recent years. I think they still have the cottage arrangement as well as residence in the main hall, but they do not have the infirmary arrangement that North Carolina has. Another addition to the North Carolina situation is a whole unit for physical therapy, and that is beautifully equipped with modern conveniences for those who need most any type of therapeutic help. One of the attractions there is the very location among the foothills of the Smokies with an open roof, really after the pattern of a roof garden over the newest unit. It is fully carpeted, and you can sit out there for a little tea in the afternoon on your own with umbrellas and tables and chairs and so forth and flower boxes all the way around.

Betty: It sounds delightful, and I'm sure these retired missionaries and deaconesses have really earned all of this, and it's good to know that the church does appreciate their work. And, Florence, we, too, appreciate what you have done, and the experiences you have related here are really fascinating, and we thank you very much for sharing them with us. We do thank you again.

Florence: I was very happy to do it.

Betty: You have been listening to the reminiscences of Florence Palmer, as she reflects on her 38 years as a United Methodist missionary in India.

This is Betty Turnell speaking for the United Methodist Women of the First United Methodist Church in Decatur, Illinois.