THE QUEEN INTERRUPTS

In the spring of 1959, only two years after finishing graduate work at Northwestern, I was asked to return and teach the introductory geology course in the forthcoming summer session. When I arrived at the Northwestern campus that June, I was surprised to learn that the home of Geology was now Locy Hall, rather than University Hall where I had spent so much time. I'd never been in Locy Hall, but was pleased that it was located with a great view of Lake Michigan, and very close to a small pier. (The large campus expansion into the lake came later).

Summer school students, even the brightest and most dedicated, seldom attend to academic issues as well as they would during the regular school year. Consequently, I was not expecting very much when I arrived at Locy mid-morning, to give their first exam to a class of about twenty students. Our room had windows all along one side looking out on the lake, and it was a beautiful summer day, with temperature in the 70s, bright sunshine, and a light breeze.

I was trying to keep my eye on the students and not be diverted by the beautiful lake outside, when something caught my eye. Steaming slowly to the south appeared a large yacht-like ship with three masts, followed by three or four even larger grey warships flying the flags of Great Britain, Canada, and the United States. The ship in the lead was the British royal yacht Britannia, bearing Queen Elizabeth II to Chicago at the invitation of Mayor Daley. The Queen had graced the official opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway a few days earlier, and Chicago was to be the only US city she would visit on her trip.

No ocean-going ships like these had ever been seen in the Great Lakes before, and it was soon evident that this multi-national flotilla was a serious distraction for the students, and also certainly for me. Consequently, after everyone promised not to discuss the test, we all adjourned to the pier to watch the Queen and her naval escort cruise serenely by, apparently just for us to admire. I doubt if anything like it has been seen in Lake Michigan since; at least not from a window of Locy Hall.

John Snyder, G57