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AMERICAN CONSULATE
Lagos, Nigeria
December 22, 1941

Dear Folks:

Well, here I am, finally, at my new post, getting ready for what will doubtless be, from the point of view of temperature, the hottest Christmas I have ever had. Right now, I am sitting in the Consulate looking out on a group of bushes with bright green and yellow leaves of the type that grows in Florida, and, although I have my coat off and my sleeves rolled up, I am perspiring heavily. Much to my surprise, I am informed that the part of the year just coming up is the hottest of all, although, as you know, we are slightly north of the Equator. August is supposed to be the most pleasant month we have.

I did not find any letters from you waiting for me here, but I know you have been writing. It is not strange that no letters have arrived, because there has been no sea mail for about a month, and the ships take about a month to come over. I expect a large batch when the ship comes in. The Pan American Airways has recently started a regular service from the U.S. to Lagos once every two weeks, and I think it would be a good idea if you would use that in future correspondence. The Post Office should be able to inform you when the planes are leaving; with good luck, letters can be received within three days after leaving New York.

My trip down here, after leaving London, was very pleasant on the whole. As I am not sure whether this letter has to pass through the censor, I cannot tell you the name of the ship or many of the details. We left from the West Coast of England November 20th and put in at Gibraltar for a few days, from which I sent you a wire. I didn't know whether you would be able to figure out what I mean or where I was, since the censor objected to my saying that I was "Okay halfway". The "so far" which I substituted was supposed to inform you that I hadn't actually arrived at Lagos yet. I was the only American on the ship, which was full of military, naval and air force people. If there are still people at home who think the British are not in earnest about the war, they should have met these fellows. There wasn't a one who wasn't making a big sacrifice of some kind. Most were leaving wives and sweethearts at home, but they were determined to see it through. Mostly, we had a pretty gay time. I wish I could tell you about all the interesting people I met and all the experiences they had had. Believe me, there is no substitute for a first hand account of what it is like to be on a bombed ship. It was amazing to think what some of the fellows had been through, and I couldn't help but wonder how they could face it again. My best pal on board was a Canadian fellow who was going out for duty in Freetown. As I was the only American on board, he was almost the only one who spoke my language. I hope to see him here some time.

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My accommodations were pretty good. I shared a cabin with a man who is the second in command of the London Fire Fighting Services, and he was on his way out to Rangoon to advise them regarding the organization in case of air raids. It looks, from subsequent events, that it would have been better if he had flown all the way out, but, as in my case, they couldn't find a place for him on the plane. ~~After~~ Our cabin was small, but had running water in it. The ship had no fresh water baths, and after we left England, the fresh water in the cabins was cut off after five in the evening. After Gibraltar, there was plenty of water, since most of the men went on shore there, and Mr. Kerr moved into another cabin so I could have one alone. After we got a little farther south, it got pretty hot in the cabin at night, especially since the ship had to be blacked-out ~~and~~ night and the port hole was fitted with a ventilator which let out no light and admitted very little air. After a while, I found that my cabin was located right over the ~~galley~~ galley, which helped to explain the heat. The captain and other officers were very nice to me, and I had cocktails and drinks with the captain several times. He was very fond of jokes and stories, and I think I told him a few that he hadn't heard before.

When we arrived in Lagos last Saturday, I was a bit worried for fear I would find the Consulate closed and no one to tell me where to go and what to do. However, the Immigration Officer had been asked to call the Consul if I were on board (for of course the Consulate didn't know when I would arrive or on what ship), and Mr. Jester, the Consul, came over to meet me. He said that they had already arranged quarters for me, ~~and~~ but they were not free at the moment, and so ~~he~~ asked me to come and stay with him until they were ready. He lives in a beautiful house provided by the government, and has been more than kind and hospitable to me. I think we ~~are~~ are going to get along very well. The other Vice Consul is Anderson, whose father is a prominent Admiral, or was until the Pearl Harbor incident. He, too, is most kind and hospitable. It certainly is a fine thing to come into a strange place and find such splendid people to help one out.

I think that this post is going to be an expensive one for me. It is absolutely necessary to have a car here, since there are practically ~~no~~ public conveyances at all. I hope that I will be able to order one from the States, as I hear that cars are very hard to get now. We are getting after the situation energetically. It will also be necessary to order a lot of supplies from the U.S., as there are a great many things which cannot be obtained here, and I am afraid that I will have to dip pretty deeply into the old bank account to do all this. However, it will mean a savings in the long run, since the market for second hand cars here is very good. I should also like to buy a radio. All these things must arrive within six months of my arrival so that I can get free entry, so you will see that I will have to get on the ball.

I certainly wish I could be home with you all for Christmas, although I doubt if I have much time to think about Christmas, since it is so hot it doesn't seem like Christmas at all. There will be quite a round of parties and celebrations, and Mr. Jester has kindly seen to it that I have been invited with him wherever he is invited. The office is rather busy; there are lots of details in connection with the new air line and trade matters arising out of the war. At the end of January we will have another Vice Consul, and Anderson will go to Accra to open an office there. Please give my love to all our friends and relatives; naturally I haven't been able to send cards.