

IN REPLY REFER TO
FILE No. 5



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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AMERICAN CONSULATE

Lagos, Nigeria
May 2, 1942

Dear Folks,

My, but it has been a long time since I have written to you, and an even longer time since I heard from you. The last letters were those which arrived before my No. 4 was written. I hope that you received it all right. Reading over the copy, I see I put in quite a bit of material that might be a little hot, but there would be no excuse for not sending the remains of the letter on at least. I don't remember what means I used to send it; I have had at least one sad experience with personal acquaintances who offered to take letters and the letters were never received. If you didn't get it, let me know, and I will send you the copy. I can't imagine what is holding up your letters, because I get Philinda's more or less regularly by open mail.

What I said in that letter about being extremely busy continued to be true until April 20th, when McSweeney, the additional Vice Consul we had been expecting ever since the end of January, finally arrived. That will give you an idea of how crowded the air lines are in this direction at this time. Strange to say, it isn't particularly difficult to get on a plane going to the U.S.; it is rare that anyone has to wait as long as a week at present. The big push seems to be eastward ~~at~~ for the moment. Until Mac came I was over my ears in work all the time. I tried to quit every night at seven, but didn't always make it. I didn't have any days off at all between some time in February and last Sunday. To celebrate Mac's arrival, Mr. Jester took me out to Tarquah Bay, where I swam and got a good sunburn - the first time I had been in the sun since December. In fact, I was usually busier on Saturday and Sunday than any other time. Now that Mac is here, what was a lot of work for one has become an easy job for two. In fact, it seems too good to last, and I wouldn't be surprised if something came up soon to put us back where we were before. As a matter of fact, the volume of work has also decreased since his arrival, and unless the trend is reversed, we may have a little time to spare once in a while.

MacSweeney is sharing with me the apartment over the Consulate, so he is available all the time for code work which was formerly my exclusive province. He brought a nice radio and a phonograph along, which serves to lighten up the house a bit. It is also nice at times to have a bit of company; that is true especially of meals, although I got quite used to eating alone in Milan. He is a very nice person and I have every reason to believe that we will get along well together. He also has a car, which is very useful right now.

We were successful in getting an export license for a car for me, and it should be on the way now with a little luck and not too much Army stuff. Last January, as I think I told you, we asked the Department to help in securing permission for buying a car, but never received any answer. We were also in touch with General Motors Export Corp. in New York, and some time ago received a cable from them saying that an export license had been granted and inviting me to remit \$1354.00 for the car, packing, ocean freight, marine and war risk insurance. I hope that the Government will pay for the freight, as I am entitled to have effects shipped here at government expense until I have been here a year. I wrote to the Despatch Agent in New York, but have received no indication from him as to whether or not they will prepay the freight. The receipt of the remittance has been acknowledged by General Motors.

The car, in the selection of which I had no choice at all, is a Chevrolet five passenger coupe with a right-hand drive. I think the right hand drive explains why I got it. If it had been the standard drive, it would surely have been picked off by some one at home with a high priority. Although a right hand drive is more convenient here, where they drive on the left, it isn't hard to use a left-hand drive car here, since there is no heavy traffic and little passing. I would have preferred the American style, but am glad to get what I can. It enhances the resale value, but unless I stay here until the war is over, I will probably take it with me wherever I go, if possible, in view of the impossibility of getting another one. I understand that the drive can be changed over for about \$75; if so, it would be well worth while.

I regret to say that the package which you shipped on February 26th hasn't come yet, although it is barely possible that it is in the P.O. now, as sea mail has recently arrived from the U.S. However, I wish you would send a tracer on it and try to find out what ship it went on. If it went on the West Irmo, which left N.Y. just about the time you mailed it, put in a claim for the insurance, as the West Irmo has been lost by enemy action. I am very much afraid that that is what happened, and I hope you insured it and that the insurance covers war risk. Otherwise I am not only ~~xx~~ out the \$70 but also several items which will be hard to replace. I have in mind especially tooth paste, which I need very much. I understand that you can't get any more tooth paste without turning in an old tube, and it would be quite a job to find as many tubes as I need.

In case replacement is necessary, I have been looking over the list to see what can be cut out. I have bought some white socks here. The price was 70¢ a pair, which I consider very high, but in any case I have them. That is the important thing. I will leave it up to you to figure whether the difference in price would warrant sending over another $\frac{1}{2}$ dozen. My letter with the list was written before your first parcel from home arrived. In addition to the shorts you sent with it, I have received 5 more from the Arrow Co., together with a dozen white shirts, so I don't think I need any more shirts and probably not any shorts, although it wouldn't hurt to have a few as one never knows when they may become unobtainable. I still need the light-weight pajamas (3 pairs) and the various toilet articles except Shaving Soap, which can be cut down from 6 tubes to three

in view of the three tubes sent in the first parcel. I would especially like some Palm Beach neckties. I have had practically no new ties since early 1940, and those I have are getting pretty greasy looking. I really am dreadfully sorry to put you to so much trouble, and I hope that your investigation will reveal that the parcel was not on the West Irmo; however, those are things which have to be expected in war time. Practically every one in Lagos had something on that ship. McSweeney had a trunk full of new clothes and a shipment of liquor aboard, the Consulate had several cases of badly needed office supplies and a safe which we have been trying to get for months, the Barber Line people had foodstuffs and Pan American had cigarettes and other supplies on board. I wouldn't want to give the impression that the Irmo was carrying only luxury items; far from it; but I would surely run afoul of the censors if I mentioned the other items of greater importance.

There is another problem, too. I have had no word from the glasses which were sent, I think, by air express a long time ago. They have had plenty of time to come over by sea mail in the meantime, and I need them very much. If sent air express, they are probably stuck with a whole mountain of stuff in Miami or New York. Please get after the P.O. and try to find out what has happened to them. Ask to have them returned to you and then send them to the Department together with a letter explaining what they why and why they are urgently needed. I feel sure the Department will then send them out by air mail pouch. Much to my surprise, my shirts and shorts from the Arrow Co. arrived in that way, although the packages were much larger and heavier than they should have been.

Sunday, May 3, 1942

I had to stop last night because of the arrival of an urgent telegram from Cairo. Afterwards we had four people in to dinner and went to the movies afterwards. I believe I mentioned before that going to the pictures, as they call it, on Saturday night is THE thing to do in Lagos. It is probably one of the easiest ways of entertainment, although not the cheapest, since the seats are 70¢ each. The movies are all two to three years old. The theaters are all open-air, and if it rains, the show is called off; however, it doesn't usually rain in the evening, even during the rainy season. It is very pleasant in the open air, and the exorbitant price for tickets practically excludes the Africans. Mr. Jester just called to ask Mac and me to go to Targuah Bay with him this afternoon, and I will have to stop soon to get ready.

I get letters quite often from Philinda and try to write to her at least once a week. Her divorce should be granted in June, and then I will try to get her over here as soon as possible. I am not very optimistic about the chances, though. She is working for Pan American at the desk in the reception room at the Dinner Key Airport, where she talks to the French and Spanish speaking passengers. She is an excellent linguist and I am glad that she has been able to put it to advantage. I think she makes about \$100 a month, although it may be slightly more now, as she told me she had had a raise. All the young men in Miami do not seem to have made her forget me yet, and of course I am hoping they won't. Much love to all of you.

Monday, May 4, 1942

Here is another, and, I hope, last P.S. to say that you can disregard all I said in the first part about the lost parcel of clothes and toilet articles. I have just received a notice from the P.O. to the effect that the parcels are there and tomorrow we will try to get them through the customs. I cannot let this go until then to let you know in what condition the parcel is received, since the mail will be leaving tomorrow morning. With any kind of luck at all, you should have this letter in ten days. I am naturally delighted that the things have come through after all. The ship on which they arrived came in well over a week ago and has already left, so I thought if they had brought anything for me I would have received the notice of arrival long ago. However, things move slowly in Africa.

I still haven't done anything about a radio, just from sheer lack of time. After all, if I didn't have time to write home, I certainly wouldn't have any to write for radios. Very shortly I shall write and see what, if anything, there remains in stock. I doubt whether I shall be able to get what I want, however. The problem is academic for the moment, since Mac has a Hallicrafter radio here, on which we get the news from the U.S. regularly without any difficulty. The only hitch is that we have to wait until midnight for the 7 o'clock news from WBOS, which is rather late since we have to get up at 7 a.m. or very shortly thereafter.

I am going to write to Betty and Herman very soon now. I recently issued a visa to the Deputy Scout Commissioner of Nigeria and I asked him if he had some photographs of Scout work in this country. He very kindly obliged and sent over quite a good packet of them. I thought Herman might be able to use them to advantage in some way.

Now I must stop and write a letter to Philinda. Once again, much love to all of you. I do hope that I will be able to get home next year, especially if Philinda is not able to come here. But everything depends on the war, and I cannot allow myself to be optimistic about the possibilities. Please remember me to all my good friends in Newark. I am always anxious to hear where they are and what they are doing. The next time you see Merrill Montgomery, be sure to tell him that I sent regards to John. In spite of the fact that John is probably my best friend (being neck and neck in that respect with Dick Coelho) we have never seemed to be able to get up a correspondence, even in normal times. That doesn't prevent me for thinking about all the "times" we have had together and from wishing most heartily that it were possible to repeat them or have some new ones. I certainly hope that both of them will be safe.

As ever

Alphain
P.P.S. Disregard the address on the envelope. Mail should be sent by *Spec* air mail.

