

IN REPLY REFER TO
FILE No. 16



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICAN CONSULATE

Lagos, Nigeria
May 4, 1942

L-145
p 1/2

My dearest darling,

How lovely of you to want to cry when you saw Mc Sweeney! He very tactfully said nothing about that side of it when he arrived, but talked only about how lovely you were and what I lucky fellow I am - or would be, if we can ever get together. However, when your letter arrived on April 28th, I delivered your apology, as you asked. It seems that Mac is a very understanding person. He had caught on at once, and didn't hold it against you at all. Oh my dear, how I wish I could have been standing behind you at that moment, and when you turned to run away to have gathered you into my arms and told you that we would never have to say good-bye again! It's very hard to prevent myself from going off into fits of wishful thinking like that. I can't help imagining, or trying to imagine, what it will be like, but I don't have much luck. You are so wonderful and I so pro-saic that it seems like more than I have any right to expect. It gives me unlimited capacity to wait. I will wait for you till the Judgment Day - or the day after that - if necessary (but I hope it won't be). I have never really loved anyone before, and I doubt whether I would be capable of loving anyone else. Anyway, I don't want to try.

I'm glad you were interested in the sample of pidgeon English. I found it very interesting. "Sitimar" is for "steamer"; it is accented on the second syllable. I think I can confirm that the minds are just as simple as the language. In fact, I often wonder how they understand it - not the words, of course, but the meaning. The whole business deals with matters far from the ken of most Africans and I wouldn't think that it would mean a thing to them. However, my boy is most interested in the news, and listens attentively to the rendition in Ibo, Pidgeon English, and English. I don't believe that the language itself is particularly new. It has been used in West Africa since slave days, and is very common even in areas which have been under French control for fifty years or more. I have seen Vichy propaganda releases in English intended for the natives of various French colonies. I have been told that the native languages are also very simple and without highly developed grammars. They used no articles and few tenses, which accounts for the tendency of the English speaking Africans to leave them out. They rarely say, "I am, you are, he is" etc. It's just "I be, you be, he be" etc. The only preposition used is "for". One says, "He go for house" meaning either "He is going home" or "He has gone home". "You go for pass chop" means "Go and serve the meal" (any meal). That is why it is often so difficult to figure out what they are talking about, since "for" may mean "to" or "from" or anything else. Besides that, even the educated

L-145 p 2/2

ones can rarely enunciate at all clearly. I suppose the formation of their mouths and lips just does not permit them to talk clearly. So that is another complication of life in West Africa. However, it's a blessing that they speak English at all. It would be tough to have to learn all the various native dialects around here. The prevailing native language is Yoruba (accented on the first syllable) in this section. It is said to be rather hard to learn since it is tonal, like Chinese. Their accents are not sharp, as in English, and giving the syllables all almost equal value sometimes produces a sort of Frenchy cadence.

But enough about languages. I love you, and that's much more important. Do you know that British Airways has female employees here? And if B.O.A.C. can do it, why not PAA? I have noticed that although Airways employees have no official priority status, they always seem to get around without too much trouble.

I love you pretty tremendously indeed. I have just taken your picture out of my pocket and kissed it. The celluloid cover is all damp with sweat from having lain close against my heart for many hot hours during the afternoon. You are smiling a sweet open-mouthed smile, and every time I kiss the picture, it looks as if you had just been kissed, and enjoyed it very much, and were waiting for another. You usually get it, too. I wonder if it ~~xxx~~ would comfort you a bit to know that you get kissed regularly at least four times every day? I kiss you good morning every morning, before you go into my pocket, and again twice when I change shirts before dinner. Then of course, there is good night, which is usually long and tender and full of longing. It seems a bit silly for a grown up man to be kissing a picture, doesn't it? But I do, and will continue to until the real thing makes the picture unnecessary.

There is little to say about my life at present. It goes on as usual. Mac and I have been invited out fairly frequently, and when we don't go out, we sit home and read or listen to his radio, which brings in the States very well. Sunday Mr. Jester took both of us out to Tarquah Bay again. This time it rained, and so wasn't so nice as before. However, we had a very pleasant chat with the boss. You would like going out there. I am looking forward to showing it to you.

There's nothing more to say, and I must hurry to dress as we are going out tonight and the plane leaves tomorrow. I love you and I love you and I love you, over and over again, and so help me, if given the opportunity, I will do my feeble best to make you as happy as a human being can ever be on this earth. I do hope and pray ~~that~~ and I am equal to the task, because you are worth any effort and any sacrifice. I have been sending lots of Ferry pilots over to see you in the hope that you can pass them some letters. And don't fall in love with any of them, darling, or I MIGHT get a wee bit annoyed!

5/6/42.

We missed the Clipper which left sooner than expected. With all the love you ever dreamed of,
I have just heard about Madagascar. If anything should ~~W. L. K.~~
cut off communications, don't forget to sub. always, always bring you.