

William Laurence Krieg

SOME REMINISCENCES ABOUT MEETING LAURA PHILINDA CAMPBELL

AS TOLD TO HIS GRANDDAUGHTER, MARJORIE ELISSA KRIEG, SEPTEMBER, 2010

This is a transcript of a recording made at the prompting of Marjorie Elissa Krieg in mid-2010, a few months before William's death. She titled the file, "Grandpa meets Grandma".

This is William Krieg, and I want to tell you the story of how I came to marry the beautiful Philinda Campbell. We met in Lisbon, Portugal, in the year 1941. I had been serving as Vice Consul in the American Consulate in Milan, Italy; and she had been working in France, in Paris. In that year, the governments of Italy and France decided to close all the American consulates in their countries, and the personnel of the consulates were sent to Lisbon, Portugal, to be transported back to the United States.

On the first night I was in Lisbon, my friend Hervey LeHeureux, with whom I had worked previously, took me to visit a famous Portuguese casino at some distance from town, and as we were crossing one of the large rooms there, we met a young couple walking towards us, and he said, "Here is a couple who work in the Consulate," so he introduced Philinda and Jimmy Jones. We said Hello and then parted, and that was all there was to that, but later on I met them in the Consulate, and my first impression of Philinda was not entirely favorable. She showed me an example of "petit nègre" French, and I sort of thought she was showing off her abilities in French, and I wasn't too favorably impressed. But anyway, we took part in various activities there, and eventually I moved into the same pensión (Portuguese pensão) where they lived, and we used to take all our meals together there.

I was assigned as Vice Consul in Dakar, in French West Africa, but the French government, then under the control of the Vichy regime, objected to sending anyone there who had been expelled from Italy, Germany, or the French occupied territory. Weeks went by as the State Department and the French Foreign Office crossed telegrams at slow intervals, and meanwhile we reached the month of October.

And one night, Jimmy and Philinda, and I went to a night club run by a Portuguese Goanese in Lisbon. And there we danced and had a few drinks, and as we left the night club, which was at some distance from the center of town, and from our pensión, Jimmy said, "I don't want to take a taxi, it's too nice a night." So I said, "Alright, I'll take Philinda down to the square and we will wait for you there." Consequently, Philinda and I did ride down - we rode down to the center of town, and the taxi parked, and we sat there waiting for Jimmy to appear. Quite a bit of time went by. Philinda and I chatted about our lives, and finally the chatting got a little more into details about our feelings.

And I said to her, "If I had a wife like you, I would love her all my life!"

There was a brief pause, and she said in a slightly shaky voice, "I hope you really mean that, because I love you very much!"

I was very, very surprised. I had no idea of anything of a personal nature. I assumed that they were happily married, and that I was just a good friend on the outside. I admired Philinda's linguistic ability very much - she knew excellent French, and also spoke Spanish well. And I thought that she also spoke Portuguese, because she conversed easily with our waiter at the pensión. But it turned out that it was really Spanish, because he was a Spanish republican refugee, in Portugal, so it was more Spanish than Portuguese that she was talking.

The minutes ticked by as we held hands in the back of the taxi, and Jimmy failed to appear. After quite a long wait, we told the taxi driver to return, to go to the pensión. And there we sat on the stairs and held hands, and exchanged a few kisses, waiting for Jimmy. Finally, we heard the door open, and we parted. Philinda went to their room, and I went to mine.

Exactly what passed between Philinda and Jimmy I never knew, and don't know to this day. However, he moved out of the pensión, and Philinda announced that she had decided to return to the United States. Actually, we had never said anything about getting married, but it was sort of understood that when she got a divorce, then we would try to get married.

Meanwhile, the State Department gave up trying to persuade the Vichy government to allow me to go to Dakar, and assigned me as Vice Consul in Lagos, Nigeria. The problem of transportation to Nigeria from Portugal was not simple. We wound up finally with my going to England, to London, and then being put on a British transport ship which was going to sail from Liverpool to Gibraltar, and then to Africa. I had a pleasant and uneventful voyage; and as I roamed the deck early in the morning - especially in the cold, rainy days rounding the North Cape of Ireland - I sang the song that Philinda had taught me: "Je tremblait" ('I trembled'). And my heart was full, but I was really uncertain as to what the future held; and I remained in ignorance for some time, because being in transit and during the war time, Philinda had no means of communicating with me.

I waited a long time after getting to Lagos, and finally I began receiving letters from her in which she made it clear that we were going to be married as soon as she could find her way to Lagos.