

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL
Lagos, Nigeria; May 28, 1943

L-347
P1
Dear Janie and Norman,

Philinda has covered our recent activities, which have been very limited, so well that there remains practically nothing more for me to say. The trip to the Dahomey frontier, which she covered so well, is the most interesting thing we have done for some time. It is sad to think that I have been in Nigeria so long and have had so little opportunity to see the country. This sixty mile trip is the farthest from Lagos I have been, except for my trips to Accra, which were by air and therefore let me see little or nothing of the country. As she says, we are hoping to get away for a trip to the North by rail soon. It would be more fun to drive, but it would be difficult to justify the use of gasoline for the trip and, as I have only four tires, it would hardly be safe, for it goes without saying that there are long stretches here where there are no garages or even any white men.

Now that you have learned about sending the letters via the Department, I am going to make another suggestion. We have noticed that personal mail has been coming very slowly through the pouch, I suppose because they can only send so much weight each time and that is pretty well taken up by official mail. The Army lads here, on the other hand, get their mail quite rapidly through the A.P.O., and we have made arrangements to have ours sent that way. The address is, A.P.O. 606-A, and the man in charge indicated that if senders would put "American Vice Consul" on the envelope, it would assist them to identify us more quickly. The A.P.O. people here have been most cooperative, and the lieutenant in charge here comes in to the office practically every day to bring mail and take ours. 6¢ postage only. I forgot to add to the address, c/o Post Master, Miami, Fla. We will try this system for a while and see how it works out. I will continue to send letters back by pouch, however, since otherwise I would have to eliminate all references to local geography. They did not seem to think, though, that you would have to pretend that you didn't know where we are.

I feel terribly sorry that I haven't written to the folks in Florida for so long a time. I am really going to make an effort in the very near future. If you write them soon, you might say that they are never far from my thoughts, and I have often wondered how ~~xxx~~ they are getting along. I do hope that Ninnie will soon be able to get around more easily. Shopping must present quite a problem in these days of restricted deliveries.

We were tickled to death with the pictures you sent, and only wish we had a corresponding lot to send back to you. I have never had a camera, and usually it is a good thing since cameras are always objects of suspicion these days. Right now, though, I wish I had one, as the folks at home have no picture of Philinda. There are lots of things here that would make amusing subjects, although, even here, there are so many restricted areas that one hardly dares appear anywhere

L-347 p2

with one. The local Security boys have got the developers all hopped up to turn in anything that looks at all suspicious. They once sent us a lovely batch of snaps taken by a Pan American boy of planes landing and taking off on the airport, and also an excellent one of a Clipper landing in a cloud of spray. I had every intention of confiscating them for my own use, but, out of a misguided sense of duty, I turned them over to the Military Observer, who said they were just what he had been wanting and sent them in to the War Department with official comments. Ho hum.

Our plans for coming home are extremely vague still. My time here will be up in December, if not before, but Philinda does not want to go home during the winter if it can be avoided. Leaving is usually complicated by the non-arrival of one's successor, but in my case there is some doubt as to whether a successor will be needed. Our work has fallen off a great deal, and, except for purposes of leave, it really isn't necessary to have two Vice Consuls here. It may well be that, when the Department is ready to transfer me, I will be able to leave as soon as transportation can be arranged.

Transportation is another problem yet again. Conditions for travel by both air and sea have been growing steadily worse with the lessening importance of West Africa in general and Lagos in particular in the war picture. Ships are few, carry few passengers, and are dreadfully slow. The A.T.C. is getting more and more difficult about transporting any civilians at all. You have to be able to call the President by his first name before they will even consider you. A recent example which has annoyed us all very much has been the refusal of the Army to transport Captain Roberts, General Agent of the only American shipping line to this area and port representative for the War Shipping Administration. Cap is a holder of a Congressional Medal of Honor from the last war, and after over twenty years on this Coast has an unparalleled knowledge of every port in this area. He wants to go home for consultation with the Barber Line, the War Shipping Administration, and for two months well earned leave. The Army has turned him down, in spite of the great loss to the war effort which will result from his wasting six weeks or more each way with sea transport. With all due respect to the Army (Norman please note) I think they sometimes lack a sense of proportion. We have arranged passage for Cap on the last British Airways plane leaving here for Baltimore this season. I certainly hope they will ~~resume~~ resume this service next year, as otherwise Philinda ~~wx~~ and I will have considerable difficulty in making the necessary arrangements.

I have been trying for a long time to remember to ask you whether you get TIME magazine? If not, I would like to transfer my subscription to you, as it does me absolutely no good now. The copies take forever to arrive, and the Department is now sending the Pony edition by pouch, so that when mine arrives, I have already read it. Please let me know about this; I will write to the mag as soon as you let me know. If you don't want it, I will send it to the folks at home, or to Ninnie and Aunt Vonie.

That's all for now. I hope this finds you both well and happy. With love and best wishes,