

IN REPLY REFER TO  
FILE NO. 7

L-53  
P1



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE

Lagos, Nigeria; June 2, 1943

Dear Folks:

I am very sorry indeed not to have been able to reply sooner to Daddy's nice letter of April 1st, which took just five weeks to get here. When I wrote you last toward the end of April, I had every hope that Philinda would soon be ~~work~~ again, but it didn't work out quite so well as I had expected. I had to take her to the hospital about the first of May, and she was in for four days. When she got out, she tried to do too much too quickly, had a relapse, and eventually caught malaria, which kept her in bed at home for another week. Now I am glad to report that she is all right again, except for a mild cold. She has resumed her work in the office, and we have come out of our seclusion and are going out to call on our friends again. It seems very good to see the sparkle back in her eyes again. Sometime soon (i.e., within a month) we hope to get that long awaited leave in the North. As you might imagine, all this has not been easy for me, and I lost three more pounds during her illness. I now weigh about 130 lbs. with my clothes on.

We have had one very interesting short trip since I last wrote to you. On May 15th we got a wire from Mr. Shantz saying that a Mr. Price of the Board of Economic Warfare would be arriving at the frontier between Nigeria and Dahomey at 2 p.m. on the afternoon of Sunday, the 16th, and asking someone to go out to meet him. At that time Philinda was having one of her recoveries, and she was most anxious to go. I was a little doubtful, although it is only a round trip of 120 miles, but she was so enthusiastic that I was persuaded. I wasn't hard to persuade, as I had been wanting an excuse to get out of Lagos and see a little of the back-country for a long time.

Sunday morning we packed a lunch, got a permit, filled up  $\frac{1}{2}$  the car with gas, and off we went. It was a lovely day, mostly clear, but with occasional rain squalls which laid the dust on the road. The first twenty miles or so were paved road, running north and slightly west from Lagos. At Otta, we turned west and slightly south and went more or less directly to the frontier. The road was much like a country road at home, except that it was rather poorly drained and ditched, and the surface was smooth clay instead of gravel. It was a good road for a light car, but obviously would soon go to pieces in wet weather with heavy travel. Since we only saw one car on this whole part of the road, traffic is certainly not heavy habitually. The country itself was beautiful. Most of it is forested - I suppose you might call it "Jungle", although Philinda remarked that she doubted if Tarzan would have felt at home. In most cases, though, the foliage and the undergrowth, especially the latter, were



L-53  
P2

heavy enough to meet the most critical imagination. I'm sure Mel would have loved it, although we did not see any orchids. After we left the costal plain, the country became rolling, which was a great relief from the absolute flatness of Lagos.

We arrived at the frontier at 2 p.m. on the nose, but we were not surprised to find that Mr. Price had not yet arrived. The customs and police establishments were hardly what you would expect to find at a European frontier. There was a small barracks for the police and a house, ~~under a tree in front of which a couple of native customs officials were sitting.~~ or rather a large shack, under a tree in front of which a couple of native customs officials were sitting. They directed us to the quarters of the Police Superintendent, the only white man within forty miles, and we went to call on him. It turned out to be a chap to whom I had granted a visa last summer, so we asked him about his trip to the States. His "house" consisted of a sort of open center section, containing a table, and few chairs, and a radio that didn't work. He offered to let us eat lunch at his table, which we did. There were two rooms opening off this one, one of which was his bedroom and the other his office. He said he spent most of his time going about his district, which extended 60 miles to the north and 40 miles to the south. Most of this he covers by horse back, although there are many places where he has to go on foot. He thought it would be nice to have a bicycle, since many of the native paths are smooth enough for that. He denied that his life was "lonely" being stationed, as he said, on a main road where people passed several times a week. Then, too, he visits the district officer at Badagri, at the south end of his area, and the district officer at Ilaro, at the north end. There is no doubt that it is a very healthy life.

By four o'clock Mr. Price had not yet arrived, and Philinda was beginning to feel bad, so we drove over to the French side of the border, by the kind permission of our police friend, and talked to the lone white man who keeps the French side. He kindly endeavored to telephone to Porto Novo to find out if Mr. Price had left, but was unable to get any answer from the operator. He said probably the line had been broken by a bad storm they had had the previous day. Philinda would have enjoyed more the opportunity to speak French had she not been feeling so lousy by that time. By 4:30, I decided that we must return to Lagos immediately, so we hopped into the car and drove back as quickly as possible. We made the trip back in just under 2½ hours. We found out afterwards that Mr. Price arrived at the French barrier five minutes after we left! We swore he could still see the smoke from my car. Fortunately, the person who had driven him that far brought him the rest of the way into Lagos. The next day Philinda had a temperature of 104 - malaria.

Mr. Shantz got back from his tour down south about the first of May. He had quite a time, what with defective transportation and all. He only stayed about ten days, and left for the States via Dakar. We were all terribly sorry to see him go, as everyone, in the office and out of it, was very fond of him. I should like nothing better in the future than to be able to serve under him



L-53  
P3

again. He said that there had been a number of people in London who said they would even be glad to come to Lagos with him. He is most popular wherever he goes, and I hope his new post will be a good one.

Our new Vice Consul, William Bruns, has arrived at last. He is a very young chap and very nice indeed. We like him and are going to enjoy working with him. He was in Panama before coming to Lagos.

Thank you very much for the clippings you enclosed in your letter. I was glad to see what the Advocate had done with Mr. Shantz's story on my wedding. I don't think they improved it. His version was a refreshing relief from the usual cut and dried newspaper style, with its long and, to men at least, boring description of what the bride wore. I remember how annoyed Miss Gilpatrick was when I couldn't give an accurate description of Sarah's dress when you were married. The article about the little Phillips boy's trip home was interesting. I have offered to send it to his mother if they have not already received one. His mother and father are trying hard to get home, but the transportation situation now is terrible, and I do not see that they will have a chance for some time. Incidentally, I noticed that the Advocate said nothing about Philinda's education, and I wondered if you had been able to tell them. She graduated from Miss Beard's School in Orange, New Jersey, and attended Swarthmore for three years. The last year she went to France and got married instead of graduating. Her father is Mr. John W. Campbell, 195 Broadway, New York City, and her mother Mrs. Dorothy Middleton of Flemington, New Jersey. Incidentally, I have just passed the fifth anniversary of my entry into the Service, instead of three years as per the Advocate.

There is a slight amendment in the Army Post Office address I gave you in my last letter. Instead of A.P.O. 606 it should now be A.P.O. 606-A.

I was very interested to hear about all the industrial developments in Newark, and I'm afraid Daddy was right in saying that I won't know the old place when I get home. Perhaps it has something to do with the defense area you mentioned, but someone cut out of that letter all the names of companies except the Owens-Corning. Apparently the censors don't consider me a reliable person. I have a low opinion of them, too.

I guess that is about all for the present. I intended to make a copy of this to send to the folks in Florida, but forgot the extra carbon. Maybe you can send it to them when you have finished? or at least the first two pages. I hope you are all keeping well; I have been fine myself except for worrying about Philinda.

Much love to you all.

*William*