

IN REPLY REFER TO

FILE NO. 9



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE

Lagos, Nigeria; July 9, 1943

Dear Folks:

Letters from you have been pretty scarce recently; I hope it just means that you have been busy and not that you have been sick. The last one was dated May 19th. Philinda has been receiving letters regularly from her folks via Army Post Office. They usually make the trip in not over two weeks, and I hope that you will take advantage of this service. I got a letter through the Department's pouch today dated June 21st, which isn't too bad. The pouches come in good time, but there seems to be considerable delay in the Department in getting personal letters into the pouch.

Philinda and I are leaving for Jos Monday, July 12th. I called the Acting General Manager of the Nigerian Railway some time ago and asked him if he could reserve a compartment for us. It wasn't a small request, as the railway is very crowded for space right now, and I don't know whether we will have it alone or not. Usually, they put all the ladies (there aren't many, as a rule) in one compartment at night and crowd the men into the others. I hope it will work out all right, for even at best the trip is none too comfortable. Some one compared the cars to boxes, with a shiny metal cover. I will doubtless be able to tell you more about them when we return.

The Nigerian Railway is a lot bigger and offers better service than one would expect, as least a person arriving with the idea that the country was pretty primitive - which, as a rule, it is. I was surprised, for instance, to see several shiny sleeping cars and a dining car waiting on the siding when my boat arrived. The lines run from Lagos to Kano, 700 miles by rail to the north-east, and from Port Harcourt to Kaduna, where ~~it~~ joins the Lagos to Kano line. There is a branch from Kaduna to Jos, and a through sleeper is operated from Lagos to Jos. Limited trains, romantically known as the "Up Limited" and the "Down Limited" run three times a week, and local service is run more frequently between the more populated parts. Before the war made ship sailings a military secret they also ran boat trains to make the regular departures of the main steamers for England.

The rapd is narrower than standard. The gauge is 42", and this complicates the problem of obtaining equipment, especially in war time. Considerable equipment has been shipped from the U.S. under Lend-Lease, and it is being put to good use, you may be sure. It was laid out about the turn of the century, and the

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construction does not permit very high speeds. The trip from here to Jos (735 miles) takes from noon on Monday until 9:30 Wednesday morning, when the train is on time, which I understand is a very rare occurrence indeed. Another reason for the slow speed is the fact that the engineers are all natives, and they have to be careful as regards speed as they have somewhat less discretion than a white man. They also wear out the tracks and locomotives more quickly. The limited trains, I understand, average about 15 miles an hour.

It is annoying to think of spending two days on a trip that could easily be made overnight at home, but Nigeria is Nigeria.

We are going to stay with a couple named Arnalls who are friends of Perry Jester's. They came to Lagos en route to South Africa, and stayed with Perry about two weeks while waiting a plane. When Perry heard we were going to Jos, he wrote them and suggested that they ask us to stay with them, which they very kindly did. This proved fortunate, since there are no accommodations available at the Rest House. Mrs. Arnalls will meet us with the car at Bukuru, which is about ten miles this side of Jos. Although I met them when they stayed with Perry, I don't have any very clear recollection of them, since there was almost always someone staying with Perry in those days. We hate to impose on them for so long a time, but there seems to be no choice. We will arrive on Wednesday, July 14th, and leave on the 27th. This will get us back before the end of the month, when there is usually a lot to do. The Acting General Manager kindly gave us a pass for the round trip, so there will be no expenses from that point of view. The fare is about \$36 apiece each way, so that saving is very worth while; in fact, I don't know whether we could have afforded the trip under other circumstances.

Speaking of expenses, the new income tax has got me completely confused. We have received a copy of the law, but frankly, I can't make heads nor tails out of it. My tax will not be deducted at source, but I will have to pay quarterly. I paid my entire 1942 tax at once, and I believe that is supposed to be deducted from the first payments due under the new plan. But how one computes the tax and when you make allowance for the deductions for business expenses, I'm sure I don't know. Unless some one is able to figure it out, I think I will have to write to the Collector in COLUMBUS and request his assistance. The cost of living is pretty high here, and we are going to have to cut down in order to be able to meet the tax. However, I suppose every one else is in the same fix, and that is part of the purpose of the tax.

The various strikes, riots, etc. that have been going on make a very painful impression out here, the more so because the British have their home front pretty well organized by this time. People are frankly at a loss to understand how such things could happen in war time, and I am unable to sound very convincing for the obvious reason that such things shouldn't be allowed to happen. It is most embarrassing.

Love to all,

M. King

Love + Audrey gave a copy of this.