

IN REPLY REFER TO

FILE NO. 16

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AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Lagos, Nigeria; Dec. 28, 1943

Dear Folks,

Thank you very much indeed for your Christmas greeting telegram which arrived this morning. We were very happy to get it, although we felt you shouldn't have spent the money. I also have Sarah's letter of December 6th; I hope the letter you were waiting for arrived in due course, as it was already on the way.

With minor exceptions, which I will tell you about, we have had a very pleasant Christmas season. Last Wednesday night the American community gave a party for the Armed Forces (American). It was given on the lawn at Mr. Lynch's house, and Philinda's strenuous efforts with the decorations were well repaid. The place looked very nice indeed, and they even had a little Christmas tree, decorated with a few genuine and several locally produced ornaments. Outside they had a dance floor, small tables and chairs, and colored lights. It was very gay.

We had invited all the attractive local ladies we could think of, and they came prepared to see that the boys had a good time. The boys were reluctant to cooperate, however, at least at first, and we had a lot of trouble to pry them out of tight little knots and get them dancing. Once the ice was broken, though, things went very well indeed. I was very proud of our boys. They were all gentlemen and behaved beautifully; if anything, they were too shy. Philinda's feet were swollen for two days afterwards from dancing too much. The boys didn't feel so shy with the American girls.

Christmas Eve we went to Captain Roberts' (Barber Line) house for dinner. Cappy gave us a fine meal and afterwards we went to the club. Incidentally, I had dinner on Christmas Eve two years ago at Cap's. At the club the party was very slow at first due to the fact that at least three of the people were not feeling well. After they went home, though, we gathered in some more friends and had a real jolly time. We got home about 3:30.

Christmas morning I succeeded at last in surprising Philinda. I have tried several times in the past, but the usual thing was for the messenger to bring in whatever I had bought and put it down on her desk. This time I wrote early this month to a fellow in Leopoldville and asked him to send up a nice night gown and some perfume. The nighty was only moderately successful, but the perfume was French and very nice. In addition, I got a water color painting done by a native artist which is far and away the best native art we have seen in Nigeria. It is to be placed

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on exhibition under the auspices of the Information Office in the near future, and I was only able to get it by promising to return it for the purposes of the exhibit. I had some tense moments on the afternoon when it was to be delivered, as Philinda, who had been at Mr. Lynch's fixing the decorations for the party, came home earlier than I had expected. However, we managed to get the picture hidden, and before Philinda came out of the bedroom on Christmas morning, I hung it up on the wall. She was very pleased, and that made me very happy indeed.

After ~~break~~ breakfast Christmas morning, we went by canoe to the beach. It was lovely to be out there - much cooler than Lagos, which is pretty hot and sticky at this point. The air was fresh and dry and the sky clear. We had the traditional Christmas dinner: turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, and dressing. <sup>cranberry sauce.</sup> The turkey was very good, but the real treat was the dressing, which Philinda had concocted herself using entirely things locally available. The main ingredients were dry bread, peanuts and currants. If that doesn't sound good to you, you should try it some time. Of course there is no sage here and practically none of the usual spices. The meal was a grand success, and afterwards we slept so long that it was too late to swim in the surf at Lighthouse beach. However, we took a dip in the Bay, which helped wake us up. In the evening we did nothing at all - just sat in our beach chairs on the front porch and talked and watched the stars swing across a black velvet sky. We usually sing on such occasions, but this time we had so much to say to each other of absolutely no consequence that we didn't even warble a Christmas carol. It was simply perfect. After some beer and cheese and white meat, we went to bed and slept like tops.

Sunday morning several friends came over to join us. Besides Bill Bruns and Pat, there were the two Rockefeller doctors, Bugher and Hahn, a Major MacConaughy, who was passing through town, and our very good friend, Dick Poland, British Air Ministry Representative in West Africa. Dick has returned temporarily to Lagos after a very interesting trip home to England. He gave us all the latest gossip from the halls of the Government and some interesting insight into how the American troops are getting along with the British people. Not too badly, but not too well, either. The main trouble seems to be that they have too much money: as you know, an American sergeant makes more than a British captain. They crowd the bars, drink up all the limited supplies of whiskey, and occasionally don't behave too well. However, it's nothing serious, and the beginning of the invasion will give them more to do.

Bill Bruns brought us the first bad news which marred slightly, but only slightly, the joy of the occasion. It seems that the police had had occasion to search some house in the native section. There were several boxes there, one of which was reported to belong to Willy, our small boy. It contained three cartons of cigarettes and some powder and soap, all stolen from

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our house. To go ~~xxxx~~ ahead with this story, on Monday morning in came a constable with little Willy in hand and the cigarettes etc. They were undoubtedly ours, and it was with a heavy heart indeed that I went to the police station, and, after discussing the matter with the Superintendent, preferred charges against Willy. The Superintendent explained that if Willy pleaded guilty he would be let off with a light fine, but if he tried to fight the case, he would probably get a year cutting grass along the Lagos roadside. So I tried to persuade him to plead guilty. At first he tried to tell some ridiculous story about having bought them from some boy in Apapa, but later admitted that he had stolen them. I don't know whether I got my point across or not, because today Thompson says he is still talking about "some Apapa boy". If he pleads not guilty, I will have to appear in court against him, and it will be very hard for me because I am still very fond of him. It is difficult to judge simple people like that by our moral standards. Their sense of right and wrong is not highly developed, especially as regards Europeans, who don't come within the complicated structure of family and customary ~~in~~ native law. In his eyes, we have unlimited money and huge quantities of everything. Why, we didn't even miss the cigarettes (although we did think we had been smoking awfully much!) He didn't really harm us, and therefore it doesn't seem wrong to him. However, at some stage of the game, either a moral sense or a fear of punishment has to be drilled into their bullet skulls, so little Willy will have to serve as an example to the rest of the house boys in the vicinity.

The other incident which almost spoiled our holiday was when Dr. Hahn got out too far in the ocean and started to drown. He can swim, but actually in a heavy surf, you can't swim much. He had a bad cramp in his thigh, and that made it worse. Fortunately, Bill Bruns, who is about six feet tall, was nearby, and he could stand where Dr. Hahn couldn't. He got hold of him and, after some precarious moments, managed to pull him back to shallow water. Many people have been drowned on that beach, practically all because they went out too far. I never go out more than chest-deep. Hahn recovered in a few minutes and the party went on as if nothing had happened. We are going out to the beach again New Year's Day.

I have just found out that small parcels (5 lbs., I think) can be sent by A.P.O. if specifically requested. I am therefore requesting you to send me two pairs of Airweight pajamas, as mentioned in my last letter. Did you ever send the black tax tie I asked for? I sure do need it. The A.P.O. is much better for small parcels than the pouch, which is very slow. Moreover, Philinda's mother has sent her a lot of things which have never arrived, although all the pouches seem to have come through safely (with one probable exception).

By the time this reaches you the new year will be well started, so it is a little late to say "Happy New Year". I am not wiring as it ~~is~~ too expensive, but send you all love just the same.

*William*

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FILE No. 16a

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AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

December 31, 1943

Dear Dad,

I am adding this note to this already bulky epistle to ask you if you will arrange through Carl Amkele to buy a \$37.50 War bond for Janie's baby as soon as you hear what its name is going to be. That would be a bond with a maturity value of \$50. I am mentioning this in a letter to Carl today. The check for \$37.50 is enclosed.

We are both very anxious to hear how everything goes. I hope Norman will send us a wire, although I could easily understand his not doing so in view of their difficult financial condition.

Philinda has caught cold and this puts a cloud over our plans to have a few people in tonight and then go to the Club. We will have the people in for dinner, but we will have to send them off to the Club by themselves about 11 O'clock.

Thank you very much for fixing this bond business up for me. Philinda has recently asked Carl to BUY A BOND FOR HER and deliver it to you. You can put it wherever my bonds are. When we get home I will arrange for a safe deposit box at the Park National so we can have Carl put things there without bothering you.

Good-bye again.

Love,