

IN REPLY REFER TO

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AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Lagos, Nigeria; January 14, 1944

Dear Folks,

Red 7/6-44

I am sorry to say that the New Year has started off rather badly for us. Philinda's cold, mentioned in my last letter, has developed into flu, and she has been laid up ever since. She was in the hospital for a week, but is now home again. She is still taking medicine, however, which has a very bad effect on the stomach and the disposition. Just when she was in the hospital, I had a touch of flu myself. It wasn't much, but coupled with worry about her made me feel very miserable, and it was awfully hard to put my mind on my work during that period. I hope that, after she is finished with the M & B, Philinda will feel well enough to go to the beach to recuperate for a couple of days. If we go, we will go all by ourselves and not have any company. We will take things easy and I will do some reading that I have been wanting to do for a long time. I guess we had been having such a fine time that the laws of retribution just naturally caught up with us and swatted us down, so we wouldn't get too cocky.

In a more pleasant vein, we have received the lovely Christmas box you sent us with all its contents intact. Philinda wore the ear clips and dress clip to dinner last night, and they looked beautiful. She was also very pleased indeed with the handkerchiefs. Perhaps when she is feeling better she will be able to write and thank you herself. I was delighted to get the ties and the pajamas. You know how I have been hounding you about both of them. The pajamas are especially timely, as the others are all worn out. They are so light they don't last any time at all, but they are great for this climate while they do. This time of year is particularly sticky. The Harmattan, which has brought so many colds with it, seems to be falling off, and we no longer have the cool spells early in the morning. Last night there was a sharp rain squall - the first rain of the year, I believe - and that cooled things off until the sun came out. Once again, thank you all so much for your lovely presents. The cake we have only sampled so far, as we have not been feeling like rich food, but the sample was delicious.

Sarah's and Melody's letters of December 30th and 28th arrived here January 8th - practically a record for these letters. I am always going to send my letters by A.P.O. but somehow it is easier to send them by pouch, so I don't have to remember not to mention precise geographical locations. I am very glad that you all had such a good Christmas, and note that you, too, have

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had flu. It certainly does have a debilitating effect, and I am insisting that Philinda take it very easy so as not to have a relapse. I do hope you are all fully recovered now. I was most happy to hear that Melody's composition has been received so well by Prof. Eschman, and I hope its public reception will be equally enthusiastic. I fear that, like Sarah, my musical taste needs further cultivation before it can fully appreciate modern music, but I firmly believe that the search for musical expression should go on unhindered. It seems to me that we are trying to find a musical form to express the deeper sentiments of this warped century. Ordinary jazz expresses the frenetic search for temporary pleasure, but there is little to give vent to the more profound emotions. Perhaps it is because emotions are so upset and minds so cast loose from their mooring that we are unable to express ourselves. Perhaps, after all, the slow "blues" songs - Mood Indigo, Deep Purple, Blue in the Night, etc. - come as close as anything to expressing the sadness of a generation which has lost its soul. Surely, the peoples of the world must pass through a purging before anything better can be done. There are some indications that the British have, as a result of the troubles, begun a bit to put away thoughts of each for himself and to think more of the welfare of the community. I wonder what the effect of the war will be on the Germans. If they can find themselves and devote themselves to the task of building up their country and all of Europe for the general welfare - and are given a chance to do it - there may be a chance. If they sink into apathetic inertia until roused by another demagogue, I shudder to think.

In the U.S. itself, judging from written and oral reports, there are absolutely no signs of any new spirit's being abroad in the land. Greed and selfishness seem to be unlimited. We cannot unite even in war time. What will we be likely to do afterwards? I'm afraid I take a very pessimistic view of the future.

I have had a letter from Perry Jester saying that he had talked to the personnel division about my next assignment. He holds out little hope that ~~xxxx~~ I will be allowed to come home, or that, if I did, Philinda would be able to accompany me abroad again. He suggested that I might like to go on exchange to South Africa for six months and then return to Lagos for another tour. I do not like this idea, as Lagos is getting too dull from the work point of view. I would have no objection to returning to the West Coast after two or three years elsewhere, but not immediately. Such a plan would not fit in well with the present organization of the office, either. I am waiting for Philinda to recover before answering Perry's letter. Just on the outside chance that she does not improve soon, I will have to ask permission to bring her home immediately; this is most unlikely, but I do not want to commit myself in advance of sureness. I will keep you informed of how we make out.

Love to all of you,

