

IN REPLY REFER TO
FILE NO.



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Recd 2/25-39

THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

S-24P 1/3

AMERICAN CONSULATE
Stuttgart, Germany
February 15, 1939

Dear Dad:

Your letter of January 29th arrived February 13th, and needless to say, I was very glad to get it. I hope you have not been worried about not hearing from me, for actually I have been feeling better during the last week than at any time during the whole winter - more pep, energy, and all the rest of it. I hope you, too, are well, and have not been bothered too much by colds or by the epidemic of grippe which seems to be sweeping America as it already has Europe. We have had lots of clerks out with it, and right now one of the other vice consuls is sick in bed, but so far I have stayed on my feet all the time, although there were days when I felt very much like getting off them as soon as possible. I hope that now the danger is past.

I did not write on Sunday as usual this week because of a week-end trip I made to Strassburg, France, with Treble, the immigration inspector, Teller and his wife, and Lane, a vice consul ordinarily stationed at Bremen who has been here since the first of December to help us out. As usual, the thing was gotten up on the spur of the moment. Treble asked me Friday night if I would like to go, and we left Saturday, shortly after the office closed at one. It is not really very far away; the driving time is about 2½ to 3 hours - even less if you hurry. The road for the first third of the way is one of the new Autobahns of which the Germans are so proud, and I must admit that they are as good as any of the new type road in America. They have two lanes for traffic in each direction with a wide raised strip in the middle to prevent crossing over. All the curves are scientifically banked, and one can maintain a high rate of speed on them. There is no speed limit, careful driving being the only criterion of conduct.

From Karlsruhe on the road was the ordinary type of German auto road, which is perhaps not quite so good as the Linville pike. The surfaces are of cheap material, the curves are sharp, and in the villages there are many turns and the way is not always plainly marked. We had no trouble at the border, and indeed had a very interesting time driving through the fortified area. For about ten miles or so back from the border the ground is simply filled with underground fortifications, of which nothing is visible except the entrances and ventilator pipes, and here and there one can see barbed wire entanglements. The most direct route to Strasburg is blocked off because it runs parallel to the border for several miles and gives travelers too

S-24 p2/3

good a view of what is going on. The work seemed to be completed in the sector we passed through, and since most of it is underground, there is no harm in letting people pass. We did not see any guards, but I dare say some would have appeared very quickly had we stopped and attempted to take any pictures.

Strasbourg is a marvelous place to visit. Since the French franc has dropped so much, it is very cheap now in France. I should say, as a rough approximation, that the franc has a buying power equivalent to 5¢, although it can be bought for 37 to the dollar even in hotels. Furthermore, practically every one there speaks German, which makes it much more convenient for me than if French were spoken. It appears to be a sort of custom that one is always addressed first in French; if you answer in German the conversation goes on from there in German without further to do. The only person I had any trouble with was a table girl in a night club, who apparently came from another part of France and didn't speak any German at all.

Since we gain an hour when we cross into France, we still had quite a bit of time to look around the stores and found everything much cheaper than in Germany, and in most cases also better. I got a good silk tie for 15 francs (less than 45¢) which would have cost a dollar in the U.S. and \$1.50 or \$2 in Germany, and I also got a cheaper quality tie for 8fr. I also bought some pajamas, but these were not a particularly good bargain, compared to American prices.

After the stores had closed, we went to the hotel, washed up, had an excellent cocktail at the bar, and then went to a restaurant that Teller knew about for dinner. I don't know when I have eaten such food! Everybody reveled in it. Most of them had oysters and snails, but I stuck to consumee and filet of sole. For the main course I had a marvelous piece of breast of chicken - the biggest and meatiest I have ever seen. Along with it we had simply wonderful wines - white with the fish and red with the main course. After that there was dessert and coffee, and we were surprised to find that we had been eating from nine o'clock until almost midnight. Everybody was in the best of spirits and the office was virtually forgotten.

Then we went out to a night club, which didn't prove to be so good, and after about an hour we were on our way to another. This time we had better luck and found an excellent place. They were really raising hell there - dancing all kinds of crazy dances like the Lambeth Walk. There were lots of interesting looking people, and I felt more like dancing - and danced better - than I have any time in the last two years. The Tellers and I really had the best time, as Treble and Lane were not feeling very well, and Lane went home about 3 AM. The rest of us stayed until 4:30, and Treble, who has had a lot of experience in such matters, managed to fix it up with one of the girls to come up to his room in the hotel without Mrs. Teller even suspecting what he was up to. Altogether, the evening was a huge success, and well worth the trouble of going over there.

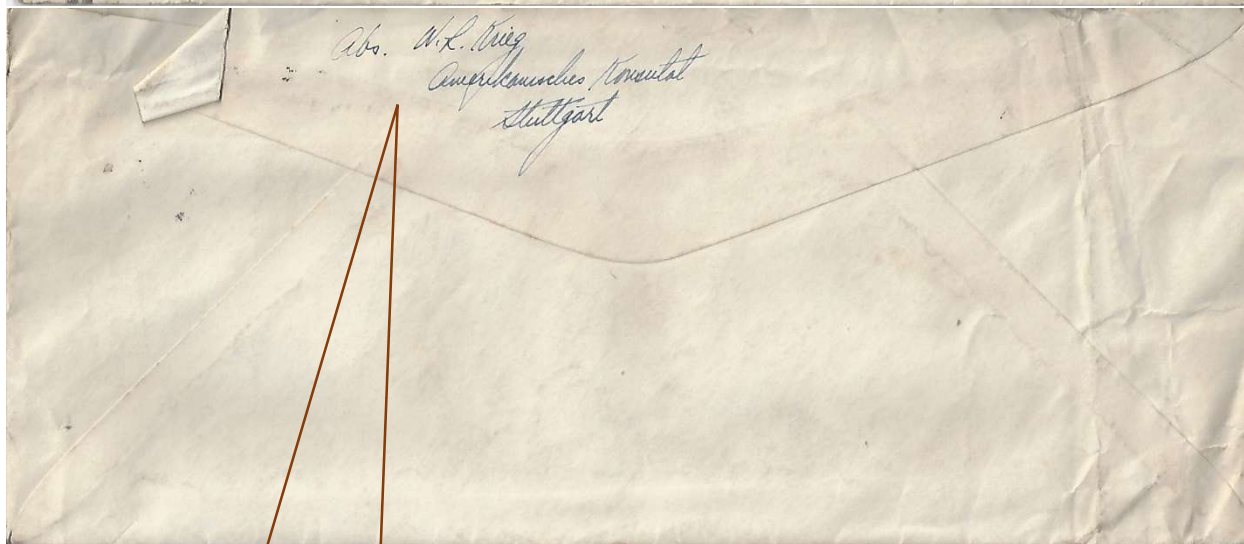
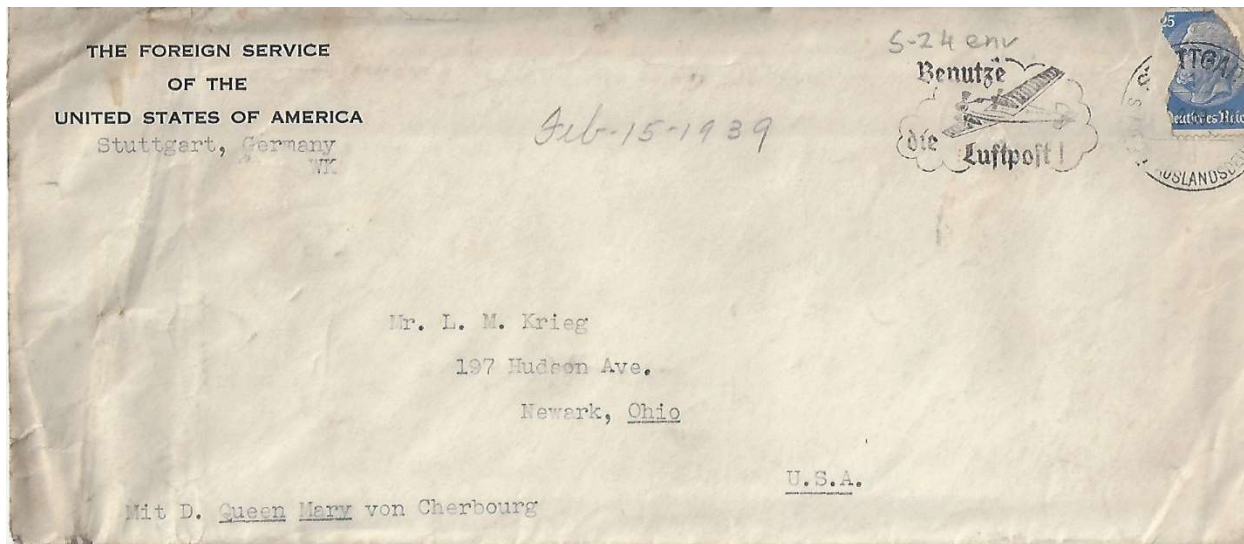
S-24 p 3/3

The next day I stayed in bed until 11:30, and then went over to see the cathedral- the famous Strassburger Münster. It is really a magnificent pile - one of those buildings which absorbed the energies of the whole city's best craftsmen for decades and even centuries. It has a very famous clock which has figures who parade around when the clock strikes. Unfortunately, I was not there at the proper time to see this, but I will make a real effort to do so the next time I go there. We left the German customs at 5:00 in the afternoon and arrived in Stuttgart in due course "tired but happy".

I was glad to hear that you had made a satisfactory deal in getting a new car, and I hope it will prove to have been a good buy. I think you will find the overdrive a big saving on trips of any length. Spalding has one on his Ford and is convinced of its value.

You inquired in your letter about whether I had started an account in London and how I got paid. I thought I had told you about the pay, but apparently not. At the present time, I get two checks each month. One is for my regular salary, rent, and post allowance, and amounts to \$254.41. The other is for currency appreciation loss; that is, to make up the difference lost by the devaluation of the dollar in 1933. Since the mark has never been officially devalued, this amounts to about 70% of the salary and allowances, and last month was \$175.26. This is the first month we have got this in dollars; formerly it was cashed in a lump sum for the office as a whole and paid out in marks. My usual practice is to use only the appreciation money and save the rest. I can either turn the check in at a local bank and have a draft made out to whatever bank I want to pay it in to and send that out in the mail, or I can send the check itself. There is no difficulty in sending it out, as the money has never been in Germany and they cannot force me to transfer it here if I do not want to. I opened a dollar account with the National City Bank of New York, London branch, to make whatever payments I have to make in Europe. I have written one check since I started the thing in December, but nevertheless I guess it is worth while. Just a few days ago I filled out the necessary forms to open a checking account at the Park National so that I will be able to make payments in the U.S. without bothering you about writing out checks. I expect I will have more use for it than I do for the London account as I want to subscribe to a couple of magazines, buy cigarettes, and other minor items. I hope to be able to save about \$250 a month as long as I stay in Germany, although of course any unexpected expenses would upset this. It ought to give me something to work on when I come back to the States and only get \$197. a month, which is the basic salary, and which is all I will get in Washington, one of the most expensive cities in the world. I still have \$200 in travelers checks, which I hope will finance any vacations I may take. If everything here were as satisfactory as the financial end of it, I would be very happy indeed. I fear I shall have to pay some income tax this year.

Well, take care of yourself; give my love to all. *William*



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