

EXCERPTS FROM SIERRA LEONE LETTERS -- #11

April 11, 1964

By now you're probably wondering if I've been eaten by cannibals, become some chief's sixth wife, or fully developed my latent talent of procrastination. If by some weird chance you chose the last one, you are absolutely kerrect! I've been on an anti-writing campaign since the middle of February. In fact, this is the first letter I've written since then. My conscience has started to bother me, plus both the lack of mail and/or letters demanding to know if I've broken my arm.

Just returned from a week and a half sojourn to Freetown. QRS's second term ended on March 24 and the third term started on April 9. Nine out of 10 girls passed in my form IV geography class; six out of 26 in my form II geography class; and only 6 out of 52 in my form I class. Kind of discouraging!!!

This term I'm teaching geography to forms IA and IB, form II and form IV; math to form IB, and phys ed to the prep class. How's that for a laugh—me teaching P.E.? They finally divided that class of 52. Form IB is the 'slow' group, and I do mean slow! Not a single one of them last term had a passing average of 55 for all of their courses.

Dave, the diamond miner, has really made a difference in my attitude—having someone to go places and do things with. Also, I've joined the Bo Club. It consists mainly of British members plus some Lebanese and the educated Africans in town. There's a swimming pool, tennis court, dances and good movies.

There's a possibility our household may be taken to court. We fired our cook at the end of the term—we just couldn't take his lack of variety any longer. We gave him 2 weeks' notice and 3 weeks of extra salary. He understood this, but then started pretending he didn't, claiming that we just told him to take a couple of weeks off. Yesterday he came and said he was ready to go back to work. When we said 'no', he threatened to take us to court. Don't know whether he will or not.

NOTE: He didn't.

When we came back this weekend, our electricity had been turned off because we hadn't paid our bill since September—a total of 28 lbs. This wasn't much compared to the PC fellows up the road; their bill came to 98 lbs.

One fellow in our group is home for several months with a smashed arm. He was taking a lorry to Freetown (one like a feed truck with benches in the back). He had his arm resting on the top of the side, not sticking out at an angle but lying parallel to the top. Another lorry passed so close that his arm was smashed—lower arm broken in 3 places and his elbow shattered.

These people are absolutely the worst drivers you ever will see. No regard at all for other drivers. They always drive down the middle of the road and will not get over for oncoming traffic. You either pull to the side or get smashed. When you are following them on a dirt road and the dust is so thick that you can't see the front of your car, they slow down and drive in the middle of the road so that you can't pass. And believe me, if you have to go below 35 mph on these washboard laterite roads, you get bounced to pieces. You try to maintain a speed of 40-45 mph. That way you just hit the top of the ruts, and not the low spaces in between.

I've received two letters from women who saw the letter Grandpa published—one collects world postcards and wanted me to send her some SaLone ones (I sent her 5 today); the other was from a woman in a church missionary society group. The women are supposed to be working on a project for SaLone—knitting hospital bandages, making a quilt, etc. No one in the group is very energetic except this one woman. She wants me to write the group, tell them a little about the country and how necessary their project is, etc. So far I haven't replied, but I'm going to take the letter to the E.U.B. church and get their advice, although I really don't see any need here for a quilt.

Enclosed is my amended tax form (2 versions). Please send my refund back plus an additional small sum. It isn't due until June 15. Hopefully, next year I won't have to pay any tax.

I promise to mail your Christmas presents and my slides before the month is over. (Note: Their original presents were stolen when her house was tied.) The film I buy here includes processing, and only takes 3 weeks to get back from England. It

took me 5 months to get back the film I brought from home because processing wasn't included.

Oh yes! The other day we saw a lorry that had hit a tree so hard at the side of the road that the hood was bent around it, and the lorry's body had tilted forward. The driver had tried to run down a deer crossing the road and missed.

The rainy season is trying to start. We've been having thunderstorms about twice a week for the past 3 weeks.

The next time you're feeling energetic would you please send me a couple of sweaters, a sweatshirt, some bras, more Jello and lemon pie filling, and a box of beef Rice-a-Roni. Pretty please! Don't forget to label the box "Old Clothes". They have raised the duty on all imports from food and beer, to gas and engine parts.

There was a picture of Salisbury (MD) during a snowstorm in the March 1 edition of the Washington Post of the courthouse lawn taken from the Wicomico Hotel. I'm homesick!

I've lost 16 pounds so far, and now weigh 9 stones 2 lbs. All scales here weigh in stones, not pounds.

Dave's company has a '62 Chevy here. It is heavenly to ride in after those *#/* jeeps. Ours spends more time in the shop than anywhere else. We have to push it every time to start it. The Africans think it is hysterical to watch white girls pushing a Jeep. We don't.

The Beatles are a hit here also. Its good music to twist to.

Sorry I wasn't able to get a set of the new country-shaped SaLone stamps. It was a limited issue, and they were either sold out or the lines were too long. They are adfixed to wax paper so that you can peel them off to put on letters.