

EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS FROM SIERRA LEONE

September 9, 1963

We arrived in S.L. about 11:30 AM, Tuesday 9/3. We spent the past week at Fourah Bay College on mountain top overlooking Freetown—fantastic view of city and bay and mountains. There was a 3-day orientation program at the college, then several days of freedom for shopping and going to the beach. The beach (Atlantic Ocean) is just like pictures you've seen of tropical beaches—tree lined, curved, backed by mountains covered with lush vegetation, a cloud anchored to the mountain top, and hibiscus bushes along the road. The water is much warmer than at Ocean City (MD).

I didn't do much shopping in Freetown since I was moving in 2 PCVS from the previous group who already had most things. If you go into a British or Lebanese shop the prices are fixed, but if you buy from the Africans, you bargain for each article. I think every African woman and child sells things. They either sit along the street with goods in front of them, or they walk along the street with goods on their heads and ask if you want any. If the kids aren't selling peanuts or bananas (I've never tasted better bananas), they're begging pennies from you.

Speaking of food, I've probably lost 5 lbs. this past week. We were fed British food at the college, but it was usually cold and I dislike lamb. I lived on bread and butter and water. We could only drink water in the dining hall. Dorm water was okay for showers, but not to drink. Water here is so soft that I can get a sinkful of suds with cold water and a bar of soap.

Freetown is composed mainly of small shanties crowded together. They looked clean, however. There was no noticeable odor since it is

against the law to kill vultures because they eat the garbage. There are open sewers on each side of every street. The people bathe frequently in every stream there is. The women wash clothes by pounding them on rocks by the stream and spreading them on the ground to dry.

Bo is very nice. It is 160 miles from Freetown (100 miles paved, then 60 miles of dirt). Imagine the worst farm lane you ever saw in a clay area, and that is the unpaved section. 40 mph in the back of a jeep station wagon with 3 other people and a mound of luggage is a quite tiring 4.5 hour ride. Bo is built on suburb plan, no shanties. Each house is separate from the others, usually of concrete block or laterite block construction with a corrugated roof.

I am living with 2 old PCVs and a VSO girl. VSO is the British version of the PC but is only for 10 months. We have the entire second floor of a house—huge living room, 5 bedrooms, kitchen and bathroom with cold running water and electricity. Right now there is only a boy to wash and iron. But since there are four of us, we are getting a cook next week.

My pay is 50 pounds per month. A pound equals \$2.80 cents and is comprised of 20 shillings or bobs (14cents each). None of us felt like it was real money, but rather that we should be playing Monopoly.

I'll be teaching geography and English at Queen of the Rosary Secondary School which is run by Irish nuns. The Holy Rosary Order of Nuns was founded by a man named Liebermann, so the nuns wondered if I was R.C.

We had a thief climb up to the front balcony last night. All he got was a skirt and one towel before we scared him off. Everything must be kept under lock and key, and all windows are barred.

P.S. I never want any of my letters to get in the paper.

