

EXCERPTS FROM SIERRA LEONE LETTERS -- #12

May 24, 1964

Dave, the British fellow I was dating, has gone back to England permanently. The diamond mining company wasn't having much luck, so it suddenly decided to close down. The boss flew out from England one day and said you all are leaving tomorrow; and they did.

We've practically had more time off from school this term than we've had in the classroom due to Moslem and Catholic holidays, SaLone Independence Day, and the first prime minister (Pa Margai) dying. I never had to teach that PE class by the way.

What's this I hear about Governor Wallace getting 44% of the Maryland vote? Politics, elections and campaigns are much more interesting from this distance. You don't reach a saturation point from over exposure to TV speeches, etc. I don't think the GOP has a snowball's chance in hell this year. As things stand now, I'll vote for LBJ.

My students are as hopeless as ever. Did you know that the two most important products from cattle are cotton and wool, or better yet—maple sugar and eucalyptus oil? After spending five weeks on adding and subtracting plus and minus numbers, half of the class got 5 or less right out of 30 questions on the test last week.

My big thrill!! The new prime minister Albert Margai, a brother of the late PM, was entertained royally here in Bo last week. To start with, the ministers of Industry and Trade, Information, and of Interior came to our house; and all we had to offer them was water. Through the minister of the Interior, who had a date with my roomie Anne, we were invited to both a lunch and a dance for the PM the next day. We couldn't attend the lunch because of school, but did go to the dance. Part of the evening we were seated at the PM's table. I was directly across from him. The next day I shook the PM's hand as he left for the airport. The PM's secretary told me to look him (the secretary) up when I was in Freetown, and invited me to Kbala in the north some weekend. (Note: I did not take him up on this invitation.)

Moyna, my VSO roomie, and I befriended a Swiss business consultant who was having a very frustrating time trying to talk to the PM about a prospective business deal. He knew we were looking for a ride to Freetown. On Friday morning he turned up at school with two plane tickets for us, which we accepted. In Freetown he took us out to lunch at the Paramount Hotel, the best place in town. We were a little worried about what he expected in return, but it was just a friendly thank you gesture for entertaining and befriending him. He finally got his talk with the PM and settled the deal on Saturday morning.

I acquired Dave's kitten when he left. It likes to sleep on top of my sagging mosquito net about 2 inches above my stomach.

The rains have started. The bugs and flying ants are out in full force. They were so thick the first few days of the rains that when you were driving you had to turn the windshield wipers on to be able to see.