

EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS FROM SIERRA LEONE -- #21

(Letter #20 was not in the file.)

March 24, 1965

Sorry I haven't written, but I've been on an anti-writing spree.

This past weekend I started making arrangements and reservations for my trip home. My reservations are into and out of Conakry, then just open booking. I leave here on July 17 for Conakry, then from there to Dakar, on to Casablanca, then to Madrid, Nice, London, New York, and finally to Salisbury. This agenda probably will take 6-7 weeks. The cost of the plane ticket is \$446, which the Peace Corps will pay. Actually they pay from Freetown to Salisbury, but the travel agency figured out the route based on the mileage allowance.

Side trips I want to make include: 1) Casablanca to Marrakech; 2) various cities in Spain including Toledo and Barcelona; 3) Nice and then from there by train to 4) Italy—Rome, Florence, and Venice; 5) Paris; and 6) London. I will probably spend about 2 weeks in England visiting my friends from Bo, the Crans, in Cornwall. They will be on home leave. Then meet Don and Danny in London.

In addition to my plane ticket, I can use one third of the \$75 per month the PC has been banking for me, approximately \$450, for my travel expenses. I have \$315 in the bank here, and plan to save another \$210 by July. Giving me about \$975 for my travel expenses.

NOTE: I used Europe on \$5 a Day as my travel guide, and generally was able to keep my daily expenses fairly close to \$5. I remember staying in a pensione in Florence beside the Arno River that cost \$2 per day.

For the past five weeks I've been kept hopping by my job. Mr. Kamara, who is in charge of CARE's Makeni warehouse, has been on sick leave. So, I've been running the warehouse, scheduling deliveries, making deliveries to the smaller bush schools, etc. He's back now, so I'm back to playing second fiddle.

NOTE: CARE originally was an acronym for Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere, Inc.

The U.S. dock strike really has hindered our food deliveries since all of the food is U.S. surplus. It also has disrupted my paper delivery. The last Post I got was dated January 16. Plus, there is a plane strike in London, and two thirds of our airmail comes through there.

No, I haven't tried your carrot cake recipe yet because I can't get fresh carrots. But, I have a new skill—I've become a bread baker. Twice now I've baked three loaves of bread each. I was thinking of airmailing you a slice, but didn't because 1) it would be too stale to eat by the time you got it, or 2) someone in the post office here would probably eat it. My baking was brought about by the U.S. dock strike since most of the flour here is imported from the U.S. and Canada. There has been little or no bread at all in the whole country in the last month. Luckily we had bought a 50 lb. sack just before the shortage began. Normally Pat does our baking but she was in bed with malaria and amoebas.

NOTE: Our oven consisted of a one-foot square metal box with a wire rack which was placed over one of the two burners on our kerosene stove.

Sharon has been sick the past month with diarrhea and stomach palaver. So far, Meg and I haven't been succumbed. But, the PC doctor is beginning to wonder about our household. One week I am constipated, and the next I have diarrhea. But I've gotten used to it. (Over here, discussion of one's diarrhea, dysentery, amoebas or worms is completely acceptable conversation at any time.)

The feature articles in March's Peace Corps Volunteer magazine are on Sierra Leone. As far as I know, I'm not in any of the pictures.

We killed another snake in the house yesterday—an African striped beauty snake. It was about 2½ feet long and ¼ inch in diameter. It is a back fang variety and slightly poisonous. Our houseboy beat it to death.

Last week one of the RD (rural development) fellows ran over a cow with my (temporarily) Land Rover. It had been knocked down by another cow just in front of him. He got stuck on top of it. He had to put the Land Rover in 4-wheel drive and rock it back and forth to get off of it. The cow wasn't dead yet. The Fulas, who herd cattle, are Moslems and won't eat meat unless the animal's throat is cut. In order to save himself the price of the cow (about \$25), he tried to cut its

throat with his with his pocket knife. Luckily a lorry came by and one of the passengers finished the job with his machete.

Five weeks ago the people on Tony's job hired a launch for an all day excursion up the Rokel River to Bunce Island about 20 miles from Freetown. We stopped at Pepel where SaLon's iron ore is loaded onto *ships*. *We went swimming in their pool and had a curry lunch in their club house.* Then over to Bunce Island and explored the ruins of an old British fort/slave-trading post.

Three weeks ago 10 of the same people hired a 25-foot fishing boat for a trip to the Banana Islands just 3 miles off the southern tip of the peninsula. It was an all-day picnic and swimming party. I burned and then peeled—my skin, not my suit.

We can buy U.S. Jello now in Freetown. It is amazing the number of U.S. products that are available now. This weekend I paid \$1.20 for a 5-ounce jar of Libby's dried chipped beef. It was the first I've had since I arrived. Libby, Heinz, Standard Brands Inc. (Royal), and Kellogg are the main U.S. brands. We have arguments with the English over which brands are British or American. For example, the Heinz and Kellogg products we get here are manufactured in England by their overseas branches.