

15 Meyer Street, Oaklands,
Johannesburg, Union of S. Africa.

November, 1954

Dear Friends,

Since Bob and I find it impossible to write each one of you of every experience we have over here in far-away South Africa, we hit upon the idea of a newsletter just giving you the highlights of the past year. If we don't hurry and get this in the mail it won't reach you by Christmas, so will try to finish it this week (second week in Nov.) Air mail is expensive overseas as you probably know, so we plan to send this by ship which takes about 4 weeks and maybe longer since it will arrive during the Christmas rush.

One reason I've found it so hard to get down to writing this thing is that summer is here, and it is so tempting to stay out in the sun - - working in the yard, swimming and enjoying all the temptations of summer. Does this make you envious! Well, try to remember that our seasons are reversed here and that while you were enjoying the 4th of July holiday Bob and I were huddled in front of the fire place trying to keep warm. July is the coldest month in South Africa. Just because this is Africa don't think that we have a perpetual summer because we don't. The altitude is about 6,000 feet and its plenty cold here in winter.

But South Africa is at its loveliest now; beautiful flowering trees and shrubs, roses and bulbs decorate the scene; wild flowers cover the hills and plains, and it is truly beautiful. This is the rainy season and grass and trees are plush green.

Johannesburg is a modern city, not unlike any American city of equal size. It is perhaps a little more modern-looking than most because it has grown so quickly - - reminds me of Houston in that respect. The city is surrounded by huge mine dumps that are gold in color, and is situated on rolling hills. The combination makes Johannesburg a very picturesque city, indeed. But before we get too involved with the present, come with me while I turn back the pages of the 1954 calendar to the month of January: -

January found the Kokernots busy packing, getting papers and passports in order, and saying good-bye to USA. We sailed from New York, after a 6-months stay there, Jan. 29. I must explain here how we happened to be going to Johannesburg. Bob received his long-awaited and anticipated appointment with the Rockefeller Foundation August, 1953. We moved to New York City from California, via Texas, in order for him to prepare himself for his South African assignment where he is now studying insect-borne virus diseases.

The first day at sea was calm and lovely. I began to wonder why people ever talked about sea-sickness and other unpleasant things that seem to accompany sea-voyages. The second night out I knew! Bob had very wisely been taking ~~drum~~amine from the moment we waved farewell to the Statue of Liberty, but not me -- that was all in a person's mind!

About.../

About 10 o'clock that night the ship started rolling! Bottles rolled off the dresser, toys flew across the cabin, and we hung unto our bunks for dear life. We piled pillows around Jan in her bunk and tied Peggy's crib to a table. This storm lasted without stopping for six days! We later learned to sleep with life-jackets stuffed under our mattresses to keep from falling out. Peggy and I were both nauseated that night. Jan refused to eat for six days and we had to force ourselves. All the books, magazines and stationery we had brought with us were in vain. It felt so good to lie down!

Finally we were out of the storm (one of the roughest on record for that ship -- the S.S. Excalibur -- an American Export Lines' ship), but not before it broke a porthole two cabins down from us, showering glass and water on the two startled occupants! They were moved to the only available cabin on the ship -- the \$100 a day suite! Such luck would never be ours. After the storm we began to enjoy our cruise, met many interesting people and chased our two offspring (at that time Jan was nearly $3\frac{1}{2}$ and Peggy was 14 months) around the decks and up the ladders. We stayed up until 2.30 a.m. the 8th night out in order to see the Rock-of-Gibraltar -- and didn't see a thing but search lights! Our first port-of-call was Barcelona, Spain -- a beautiful sunny city, though it was much in evidence that the country was poverty stricken. Our "dollar" bought more there than in any other country we visited on our trip. The people were wonderful, so friendly and helpful -- especially when our own poor Spanish failed. We visited many points of interest, among them an exact reproduction of Columbus' ship. I didn't realize it was so small -- very much like a big yacht. After our recent experience in crossing the Atlantic I appreciate his discovery more than ever.

Our next port was Marseille, France. It was pouring down rain there. We rented a "Cooks Touring Service Car" and drove around to points of interest, later driving out a little fishing village to eat lunch. As you know the French are great wine drinkers -- and literally wine is cheaper than water. All drinking water is bottled as it is against the law to serve tap water since it is unsafe. Well, ah this little restaurant we couldn't even get bottled water. Luckily we had brought milk and a little water for the children. With our meal, which was delicious, but highly seasoned, we were served a different wine with each course. The first was a sort of Anise drink. They raved about it as an appetiser, but we managed to get down only about two swallows as it tasted exactly like paregoric. With all the amebiac dysentery in that part of France I wonder if it wasn't paregoric! We managed to get through the meal without hurting the feelings of the French, but it was sure good to get back to the ship and drink lots of good fresh water. (This ship distilled sea water) I think we Americans are the only people that drink water with meals.

Due to heavy rain we didn't get to do nearly enough sight-seeing. And with our limited French (the only French either one of us could recall was the little song "Frère Jacques.") it was difficult to get around even though our driver translated for us. I did get some French perfume and a few other remembrances. The French countryside was beautiful even in the rain. As we left we saw the Isle of Capri in the distance.

Lucky for us we had a day of rest at sea before our next port-of-call,

Naples.../

Naples, Italy. We arrived there about 6 a.m. and saw beautiful Mt. Vesuvius in the distance. By 8 a.m. we were on our way, in another "Cooks" car, to Pompeii. We spent a short two hours there and had to drag ourselves away in order to see more of the country. We took the Almalfi Drive (1000 curves around the mountain and bay - with the driver honking before each turn on the narrow road - built in the days of the Roman empire). This took the rest of the day. It began raining about noon and was still raining when we got on board ship. Such scenery we had never before seen. In our old age we hope to go back there and spend a summer. The Mediterranean is so beautiful -- the prettiest blue I have ever seen. We had lunch up high in a hotel looking out over the sea. Of course we had spaghetti which put any other ever eaten to shame. For dessert we were served home-cured raisins wrapped in grape leaves, and fresh tangerines just pulled off the trees. You should have seen Jan and Peggy devouring all the food. The meal was accompanied by a small Italian orchestra comprised of a guitar, a man blowing into a huge jug, and two girls singing such old favourites as La Poloma and Santa Lucia. This was followed by the passing of the hat. We spent a little time in a near-by shop where we bought a beautiful music box (the tune was of The Third Man Theme) which has a ballet dancing doll inside. We also got a beautiful wood inlaid picture, the scene being one on the Almalfi Drive. Hanging in our living room it gives us a pleasant reminder of our wonderful time in Italy. We spent so much time window-shopping that we barely made it back to our ship, which was due to leave at 7:00. We arrived at 6:45, breathless! Typically, the ship departed at 11:00 p.m. -- loading had been held up due to heavy rain.

After leaving all land behind (we sailed past Sicily) we again ran into rough weather - so bad in fact that we listed for about 8 hours. I should add here that approximately \$12 dollars had been wasted on our reserving 2 deck chairs which we rarely used on this trip.

Finally 12 hours late (and several days later) we arrived in Alexandria, Egypt. This was Feb. 14. For the first time we felt we were really in a foreign place. The language was completely strange, the people entirely different. After much delay we were allowed to get off the ship where we were met by American friends from Cairo. We went to a hotel to get some tea, and were set upon by a "Gali-Gali" man (I'm not certain of the spelling). He entertained us for about 20 minutes with his magic tricks. He was wonderful and I am sure he has delighted many a tourist as he did us -- a wonderful introduction to the Middle East. He pulled baby chicks out of Jan's and Peggy's pockets and did many other fascinating tricks. We were all shrieking with laughter when he left.

We drove on to Cairo that night and arrived there about midnight. You can imagine our thrill in seeing the pyramids for the first time by moonlight. We were exhausted on arrival and fell into bed. Our host and hostess were our good friends, the Telford Works, who are also with the Rockefeller Foundation (now in India). They made our stay in Cairo most enjoyable, what with the use of their car, chauffeur, good food, and hospitality. However, due to the Works (including their 8 and 9 year old daughter and son) I nearly suffered a nervous collapse. Already exhausted from the trip thus far, and in the process losing about 8 hours in time changes I wasn't ready for any severe shocks. Never-the-less, as I lay sleeping in the early morning (5:30) Egyptian sun which was shining through the

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windows I felt a thud on the bed and awoke face to face with a hairy monster! Shrieking I leapt out of bed, no doubt scaring "it" out of its wits, too. I still marvel that I didn't have a heart attack. "IT" turned out to be their pet(?) mongoose! In the next hour we discovered that the Works also had in their "family zoo" 4 crows, a falcon, innumerable white mice (with which to feed those just mentioned), a turtle, and a dog. Naturally with a mongoose as a bed-fellow I didn't mind too much the fact that the children and I were due to leave Cairo that morning for Damascus, Syria. I was going to see my sister and brother-in-law, the Edward Tiptons and my two nieces, one of whom I had never seen. We drove through Cairo again by daylight to the airport. We were completely awed by all we saw -- camels, people in robes resembling night-shirts, men on donkeys, the Nile, everything we had heard about.

It was reluctance that I boarded the plane with the children (Bob was staying in Cairo on Rockefeller business), but knowing I was coming back in a week to see Cairo's sights was comforting.

The plane set down in Beirut, Lebanon 3 hours later, but not before we had seen the Suez Canal and Port Said from the air. Such a thrill! After much delay in customs I greeted my sister whom I hadn't seen for 3 years. We talked through a mesh fence for about 20 minutes before we were allowed together and outside. We were halfway to Damascus (a 3-hour drive) before we remembered we had not kissed each other. The mountaneous pass was deep with snow and Jan wouldn't give us any peace until we stopped and let her make some snow balls.

We were a tired, but elated bunch when we finally reached Damascus. But the week was filled with much sightseeing. What a thrill to see the remains of the Old Wall. Not to mention St. Paul's window, Annanias' house, and many other points of interest. The old part of the city, I am sure, is just like it used to be in Biblical times. We walked down "Straight Street", saw many Moslem mosques, and went to the main shopping section called the "Sook" (I am spelling most of these names phoenetically). We saw so much that I can't begin to put it all down on paper. It is such a help to see a place like this with people who have lived there and can serve as guides. It is also good to know that the food you are eating is clean, and especially nice to have one's sister as baby sitter, halfway around the world. The Tiptons have since returned to the United States.

The newer part of the city is beautiful. Many of the homes and apartments are built of marble. The floors are beautiful, but every sound echoes. We enjoyed the availability of Gertrude's servants, too, I should add. One thing I was surprised about -- according to my sister there are a great many Christians in that area. I was under the impression that there were mainly Moslems, but there are great numbers of Christians -- mostly Greek Orthodox. One could also see evidence of the Crusaders in the few blond, blue-eyed children. We saw the Arab refugee camps which were pitiable. Bob met us in Damascus for the weekend, when Gertrude and Edward gave a dinner party in our honour. We met many of their American friends whom we had heard about through them during 3 years of correspondence, and also enjoyed viewing their 35 mm color slides of parts of Syria and the middle East which we couldn't hope to see during our short stay.

Again.../

Again it was with reluctance that we had to leave. Syria (mind you we only scratched the surface) was delightful and interesting -- more so due to the hospitality of my sister and family.

We arrived back in Cairo by plane about noon Monday and immediately began sightseeing. Of course, we went to the pyramids by Camel which was quite an experience indeed. The camels we rode were named "Canada Dry" and "Ginger Ale." Peggy and Jan thought it was better than anything on the whole trip.

We drove through the "city of the dead" where living relatives live with dead ones in the tombs because of nowhere else to live. We saw more mosques, went to the shopping center called the "moskey" (again spelled phoenetically) and to the museum where we saw magnificent statues, paintings, tombs, mummies, and other remnants of an ancient civilization. We both think that Cairo was the most interesting city on the whole of our trip. Just hope we can go back there someday and really spend some time there. Certainly that is true of every place we visited. The day Naguib resigned Bob and I were downtown the whole day. When we came home that night for dinner Mrs. Work was most glad to see us as she said that all Americans and British had been warned to stay home in case of any riots. We didn't see a sign of trouble all day. However, that night when the British Overseas Airways Corporation telephoned to say that our plane would leave an hour earlier than scheduled we were a little alarmed.

Before leaving Egypt let us say how surprised we were to see the modern buildings and shops, and prosperous citizens as well as the poverty-stricken poorer classes. It is a very delightful and richly interesting country to visit despite many things one hears about. Forgot to tell you that we saw some "belly dancers" at an Egyptian restaurant. Will admit that Bob had a hard time concentrating on the menu that night. Actually it is a graceful dance, and not easy to do, I am sure!

On with the trip: The places we stopped on our 20 hour flight to South Africa were Khartoum, Sudan, Nairobi, Kenya (no Mau Maus), Livingstone, N. Rhodesia where we saw Victoria Falls. The pilot, being very generous circled over them twice at a low altitude. Finally we arrived in Johannesburg - exactly one month after we left New York.

I wish you could have seen us going through customs. They saved us til last, I am sure because they figured it would take them all night to go through our things. We had collected odds and ends from each place visited (typical tourists) and among the things spread out, besides many suitcases, were : a box of disposable diapers (we had started out with 24 dozen and had a few dozen left.....we left a trail nearly 10,000 miles long); a huge brass-tray - about 36 inches in diameter; a camel saddle, a large hassock, our inlaid picture from Italy, which we regretfully discovered wouldn't fit in any suitcase or box we had; Bob's camera equipment -- quite a load in itself; and innumerable trinkets and souvenirs. We got through without too much difficulty as the customs men got tired before they finished.

As I sit here at the typewriter I am trying to decide what impressed us most about Johannesburg the first day! I think probably it was the beautiful

gardens.../

gardens. We had been led to believe that Johannesburg was much like dried-up West Texas. Certainly parts of South Africa are, but not this city. We arrived just at the end of summer. After several months of daily showers and warm sun, the gardens were cascades of color. I was also impressed with J'burg's size, cleanliness, and the number of Natives (sometimes called Africans -- equivalent to the Negro, though there is a slight difference in physical appearance). I'm so used to seeing them now that I don't think much about it, but when one remembers that nearly all manual labor, industrial and domestic, is done by them it does add up to quite a large total. These people range from the very raw Native (men with big earrings in their split lobes and women in Native dress) to the civilized-for-several-generations-Native. In the city the latter are in the majority.

We have a Zulu house-and-garden-boy and a Basuto girl. He comes from Zululand near the East Coast and though uneducated is intelligent and good as gold. The girl has finished high school and speaks four languages (English, Basuto, Zulu and Afrikaans, a Dutch dialect) which I think is remarkable. She is also loyal and good. I think when one considers the short civilized background of these people they have done remarkably well. Grace is also a Christian. No matter how good they are though, once in a while something happens that shocks one to the core in matters of sanitation etc. Here is one example. We acquired a young puppy when we first arrived -- She was a Rhodesian Ridgeback, a dog unique to this section of the world. They are big dogs, very strong, and were once used as lion hunting dogs in Rhodesia and other lion-infested parts. Well, Lou slept outside. The milk was delivered every night and was left on our back porch. The servants brought it in the first thing every morning. I noticed that we never had much cream, and finally decided that they were filching the cream for their tea and mealie meal - their staple diet - (it is very fine white corn meal). Naturally I spoke to them - this had been after about 3 weeks as I wanted to be sure. Here was the answer I received: "But Madam, the dog has been biting the aluminium caps off the bottles and drinking the top off the milk". So for 3 weeks we had been drinking what we thought to be pure-germ-free milk that actually had been completely unsanitary, but to them it wasn't important enough to worry about! Needless to say Lou was a healthy puppy, though I am sorry to say she was hit by a car when she was about 6 months old.

One thing I must say is that just because this is Africa don't think that there are jungles and wild animals about. I don't think there are any jungles in South Africa and certainly the only wild animals are in the game reserves, of which there are several, but all a good many miles from here. I was quite disappointed when we first hired Jack and Grace. I asked them about life in the jungle and what animals they and their families hunted. Neither knew what a jungle was and they both said the only wild animals they had seen were in the Johannesburg zoo.

I won't go into politics in this letter since I don't know enough about it, and my opinions may not be mature enough to express, but I will say that although you get much news in the American Press about South African racial affairs you only get one side. But there is not only a bad side, for much is being done for the Native which I am sure you never heard about. I know of one writer who was in Washington, D.C. not so long ago, and he approached a prominent publisher wanting to write an article in answer to much of the criticism of South Africa to show how much progress is actually being made here in race relation. The answer: "No, that

wouldn't.../

wouldn't be newsworthy."

Many of you may be interested to know what makes front page headlines here. American Negroes! I think most Americans here in South Africa are quick to criticise the shameful way in which Natives are treated. How ashamed we were last month to read of the American whites who raised such a fuss over the new Supreme Court ruling of Negroes in white schools. Believe me, every story of every riot in U.S. Schools was on the frontpage, top right hand column in huge headlines on every Jo'berg newspaper. Not very good American propaganda! You may be surprised to know that the huge Witwatersrand University here, and also the medical schools of South Africa have no color bar. Has that been printed in the American papers?

While on the subject of education, we have met several M.D.'s and PH.D's of the Native population, so this helps to prove that slowly but surely progress is being made among their race. Of course the majority are uneducated, and the ones reaching such a high level of education have had a difficult struggle, but more and more are bettering themselves. No thanks to the present government, of course, Several organizations and groups here are responsible for sending Native men and women to the U.S. for further study, also. How hard it must be for them to come back to a country where they have no rights what-so-ever. They can't even vote, though they pay taxes.

Well, I promised not to get involved in a discussion over this, but its hard to keep from discussing the subject when discussing South Africa.

Now when one forgets the color situation in South Africa one finds a most fascinating country. The most interesting place we have been in the Union is Kruger National Park. This is a wild-life game reserve about 200 miles from here. The park covers an area nearly 8000 square miles. It is 200 miles long and an average of 40 miles across. This is reputed to be the world's greatest wild life sanctuary. From the moment you enter the park you sense a new and exciting atmosphere. At the first light of day a new world of adventure opens with the camp gates. Here the animals are free, but you must stay in your car and keep to the road. The speed limit is 25 miles per hour, but the animals camouflage themselves so cleverly that you don't see them unless you are going less than 10 miles an hour. Besides you can imagine what would happen if you were travelling fast and suddenly encountered a wild African elephant. We did that once ourselves! We were hurrying back to camp one evening, as the gates are locked at sundown. We were going just 25 miles an hour. As we rounded a corner there stood a huge elephant(they are all huge!) eating palm leaves. Bob slammed on the brakes and threw the car into reverse. The roads are too narrow to turn around on. We nervously waited for him to finish eating, and after about 15 minutes he ambled away. We were "sweating" vulgar as it sounds.

There are signs up all along the roads: "DANGER -- Visitors are warned to drive cautiously in elephant country and not to approach within 50 yards of elephants. Otherwise the consequences may be disastrous." The African elephant is very wild, is untamable (unlike the Indian Elephant - circus variety) and could toss a car over and over if his temper were riled up. Once Bob was

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taking movies of one big bull elephant. He became angry with us because we stayed on the road so long, and finally he shot out of the bushes and chased us till we were out of sight. He trumpeted twice. My blood ran cold. I've never been so scared in my life. Luckily we had obeyed the warnings and the 50 yards gave us time to get away. One never turns off the engine, and we were facing open road - taking pictures of him by leaning out the window backwards. May I add that 50 yards doesn't seem very far with one of those animals charging. Besides that, we were never sure how far 50 yards was!

In some parts of the park lions are very tame. That is, they don't mind the cars on the roads. In the presence of a car, lions are lazy, good-natured cats. But once outside his car, man becomes the ancient enemy to be attacked.

Nearly every species of South Africa's fauna is to be seen. I will mention some of the names; perhaps you have seen them in zoos, or animal books: impala, kudu, steenbuck, roan, inyala, water buck, blue wildbeest, duiker, klipspringer. Of course you are familiar with the giraffe, buffalo, hippo, zebra, hyena, jackal, baboon, monkey, crocodile -- all of these we saw. We weren't lucky enough to see leopards. There are many curious birds and beautiful ones, too. Many vultures are flying overhead -- a reminder that death is ever present in the bush.

Quoting from a pamphlet about the park: "As the shadows begin to lengthen a disturbing hush and tension is felt. In the next few hours Nature in the raw will be on the prowl and there will be swift and sudden death in scores of places. Back in the security of your camp, and you must be there before the closing of the gates -- the roaring, howling and calling of the animals continually remind you of the drama being enacted beyond the fence."

"Each of the 14 camps boasts some advantage either for animals or scenery. Skukuza, on the Sabi River, is the largest and accomodates 750 people. In season it is nearly always full and camp life is a very friendly alfresco affair. People shed their inhibitions quickly and evenings with songs and yarns 'round the camp fire -- or an open air film of wild life are delightful features of this holiday that is different."

The smallest camp that I know of in the park accomodates two families.

I wish you could see the devastation caused by elephants! There are absolute forests torn down by these creatures -- when I saw huge trees torn out of the ground by their roots I respected those animals with super strength.

I think we got our greatest thrill from seeing the graceful giraffe. They are so beautiful and tall. We have some good pictures of one getting a drink of water. What an effort to get down to it with that long neck.

I shall add that we had two flat tires in the park. Believe me, you should try changing a tire when you are quite sure that a lion or an elephant is peering down at you from some vantage point, not to mention the possibility of a python, cobra or black mamba.

Another problem was finding a suitable place for Jan and Peggy to go to the bathroom. We finally carried a chamber pot from the camp we were staying.

Well.../

Well, by risking our lives we have hundreds of 35 mm color slides and movies to show you when we come home. Its really not as dangerous as that, of course. I don't think there have ever been any serious accidents at the park. Needless to say, it was a thrilling experience. We've come to the conclusion that Texas doesn't have everything -- South Africa has Kruger National Park!_

Another exciting thing we have done in South Africa is to take a trip down a gold mine. The mine we visited is owned by the East Rand Proprietary Mines, Ltd. This is 12 miles from Johannesburg and is one of the largest in this area. It stretches underground for 8 miles. In depth, mining is going on from near surface to 9,600 feet ($1\frac{3}{4}$ miles below surface, or 4,080 feet below sea level). It is one of the largest gold producers in the world, and in the course of its life of 45 years it has produced $22\frac{3}{4}$ million ounces of gold, worth today £282,000,000. I won't convert this to dollars but there are \$2.80 to one pound. This comes from 91,000,000 tons of rock which you see in the neighbouring dumps (this is rock in the pulverized state). All these facts are from notes we took during the tour.

The daily tonnage broken underground and hoisted to surface amounts to nearly 8,000 tons. This would cover an acre of ground to a depth of 4 feet and yield nearly enough gold to make two bars of gold the size of two ordinary building bricks.

A ton of rock yield enough gold to make a coin between the size of a dime and nickle. We went only to a depth of nearly 7,000 feet (which was deep enough for me). The first hoist dropped us down a verticle shaft that was 4,960 feet below surface. We went the rest of the way down a horizontal shaft (like a roller coaster in pitch dark). We had to wear special overcoats and helmets and also galoshes. Bob took a lot of pictures down there, also.

Well, back up to surface -- and to the present for some news of us as a family.

Bob is completely happy in his new job...now nearly a year old. He finds his work fascinating. The word "virus" is part of the dinner conversation now. His work has taken him on some interesting trips -- the most recent was a trip to Entebbe, Uganda. Entebbe is about 3,000 miles from here and is right on the equator, but because of the altitude and situation on the shores of Lake Victoria is very pleasant climatically. He has also been down to the Cape Province and Zululand in Natal.

Jan celebrated her 4th birthday in October, and Peggy will celebrate her 2nd birthday this month.

We have a lovely home on an acre of ground. Nearly all yards in Johannesburg are big. I suppose because of the availibility of domestic help. Bob has finally gotten his way and we have a number of chickens: 22 babies and 9 hens. He is completely happy.

I also fulfilled a wish and have a black miniature poodle. She's a regular dog, though, who chases cats (all but her best friend, our black cat, Mau Mau) and she buries bones and tears up the flowerbeds.

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I can't sign off without assuring you that this is no "hardship post." Every thing we need and want is availability here in excess with the exception of two food items: maple syrup and cranberries.

Oh yes, I forgot to mention tea -- synomonous with South Africa. (British influence, I guess). You never saw so much tea drinking in your life. They have it about 6 times a day plus the slightest excuse to brew some more. The Kokernots have picked up one little habit. We have tea served in bed at 6:30 every morning. Threw the alarm clock away.

Will sign off with that, for which I'll bet you are glad. See you early 1956.

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL
AND A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR !!

Love from the Kokernots,