

June 29, 1955

I always seem to write letters out on the sunny porch in the morning -- that is when I write -- and I will admit that I have never been worse as far as a correspondent. But never-the-less -- this is the most pleasant time of day here -- early in the morning it is very cold and by noon time the wind usually is blowing, and by 4:00 it is very cold again. The temperature changes here are really amazing. Today is quite cold actually for a we a S ou' Easter (same as a Norther) (only from S outh Pole) day before yesterday and are still shivering from it. It snaowed in many parts of S outh Africa, but guess it is too high and dry here in winter to snow. This is the "tropical" Africa we are living in.

Peggy is out playing in the sandpile wearing her old New York snow suit. All that's missing are the rubber boots. Jan wore her snow suit to school. As I say, it warms up and by noon they won't even need a coat -- just a sweater.

Incidentally Deanie, I am so ashamed of myself for not writing you about the Christmas gifts and even though I did start a letter thanking you for them Bob sent it before I had finished it (to save on postage (about 30 cents here) I kept meaning to get another off just simply to let you catch up on our news but here it is June.

Anyway the children have certainly enjoyed the sweaters. Peggy has nearly outgrown hers as she is suddenly growing at a terrific rate --- Jan's will be good for another year and by that time Peggy will be r3ady for it. Nylon sweaters here are almost impossible to buy.

The blanket is still coming into use as our Electric blanket suddenly stopped working and we can't get it fixed here. So we have your little one with a couple other ones on the bed -- as we hate heavy covers.

We just came back from our wonderful vacation trip to Victoria Falls. If we had the money and the time we would immediately go back again. It is wonderful there. The whole trip was rather rushed, but we do have to save vacation time for C ape T own and Kruger Park.

The Falls are all that has been said about them only more so. They are simply breath-taking. There is so much water and spray that we could only comprehend their size by flying over them at a fairly low altitude -- they have these flights every half hour or so at a charge of about 15 shillings (\$2.00) for 15 minutes.

None of our pictures will really show the tremendous size of the falls. They say if one goes there in the Spring (Sept. or Oct.) before the summer rains start there is very little spray and the rain forest is hardly in exhistance -- which by the way is a beautiful thing to see -- though we had to rent heavy raincoats and hats and we did look funny. During the dry season they even have canoe trips out to an island just at the edge of the falls. (not me, you can be sure.)

We did take a launth trip about 5 or more miles up the river. It was just beautiful. We anchored at a little island and walked around and then had tea -- with monkeys grabbing bits of cake out of our hands, or behind our backs. You can imagine how the children loved that. You can also imagine how we had to hold on to Peggy and Jan in the boat as they wanted to reach down and touch the water. I will have nightmares for years over my fears of them falling into the river or over the falls.

During the trip by boat we saw both hippos and crockodiles. They say you uusually see a lot of animals, but that the river is too high now. In places right around the falls baboons

come and sit on your car, or if you are out walking and have any packages that look like food or candy you have to hold on tight or hide it as they try to steal from you.

There is a small game reserve (only 30 acres) on the banks of the river. We went there one afternoon. Shortly after we had entered through the gates we met a Wildebeest and a Zebra on the road. They refused to walk away or move over so bored we finally started around them very slowly. All of a sudden the zebra came over to the car on Bob's side and put his whole head through the window with his mouth wide open and saliva dripping all over Bob's suit. We almost never got rid of him. We presumed that he was begging for food, but we had none. We later learned that he comes up to all cars like that begging for cigarettes. I remember that his teeth were horribly stained so guess that's why. He nearly scared Jan and Peggy to death, though he seemed quite harmless -- he really did look terrifying with his mouth wide open

Another curious visitor was the wart hog. You know how ugly they are -- just about the ugliest animal in existence I would guess. Well, this one seemed quite tame and we had only seen them in Kruger park where they are so wild it is almost impossible to get a close up of them. Bob focused his camera on this one but by the time he had steadied it on the car window Mr. Warthog was up on his hind legs trying to get a look as those ugly humans inside. He was so persistent at this act that we didn't get any pictures of him as he was too close to get in focus.

But back to the falls. The hotel we stayed in was the best we've found in Africa. The food was wonderful (compared to other restaurant and hotel food on this continent.) The rooms are huge -- at least the two we had and the furniture very modern and comfortable with even mosquito nets hung gracefully from the ceiling -- tied in a bunch with pink taffeta ribbon -- but it was much too cold for us to have to worry about mosquitos.

We nearly hiked ourselves to death at Victoria Falls, not to mention what we put the children through as we didn't take the nanny. As I said, this place is terrifying as well as beautiful. There just aren't any guard rails of any kind and one could just walk off into the chasm or into the calm peaceful river above with suddenly drops off into space with a deafening roar. The spray can be seen for several miles. We first saw it from a distance of about 3 or 4 miles -- when coming into the falls. But that was in hilly country -- apparently from other approaches less hilly it can be seen for about 15 miles.

I don't have any idea how it compares to Niagara (I am always embarrassed to say here that we have never been there -- but have met several South Africans who have seen Niagara Falls and not Victoria Falls.) But I would guess that the main difference is the lack of industrialization at Victoria Falls -- There is only one 3 foot pipe with which "power" is captured -- so no doubt all the surrounding farms are without electricity -- whether this is true or not I don't know, certainly the power couldn't do more than light up the little town of Livingstone. Of course the potential power there would provide power for all of Southern Africa. Except for this I am sure the falls are much like they were in 1855 when Livingstone discovered them.

The town of Livingstone is 7 miles away -- it is a small town with a big wide street where shops and one or two tiny hotels are located. It is quite a contrast to Bulawayo which is quite a large city -- this we go through from Johannesburg to the Falls. Another large city in Rhodesia is Salisbury/.

Speaking of how dangerous still wild the falls seem to be we were amused at the many signs "beware of Wild Animals" -- As there didn't seem to be any in the immediately vicinity of the falls except monkeys and baboon we both thought it would have been more appropriate if signs saying "Beware of Falling in" ; "Don't go near the edge" etc. But there are no signs of that kind anywhere. Neither are there guard rails of any kind -- it is absolutely terrifying -- especially with 2 small children. Even at the hotel we saw a sign posted saying "Parents are requested not to leave small children unattended as they might fall in the fish ponds by the hotel. We felt they should have posted one reading: "Parents should not let children play unattended for

the hotel and fall over a 300 foot cliff into the Zambezi River (below the falls) This gorge is not over 300 yards from the Hotel."

We went to Livingstone one afternoon to visit the museum where they are having a centennial celebration of the falls' discovery. They have built a small museum containing information, relics, etc of Livingstone. It is most interesting and the objects have been collected from far and wide -- other museums in London and members of his family and many other places. Apparently these things will go back to the original owners after this year is over -- which does seem a shame since together they are so much more interesting.

Another exhibit in the main museum is on the origin of man. It is most interesting since man is supposed to have had his birthplace in Southern Africa.

I think we have mentioned our most interesting neighbor, Professor Dart (he is an M.D. and teaches anatomy in the medical school here, but the prof. is what we and everyone else address him by -- it is something honorary I presume -- or at least superior than plain Dr.) We saw one exhibit concerning things that he has discovered and studied -- actually his main interest and work is anthropology. He has been mentioned in Time twice recently under science -- I think the first was in about Jan 20 issue but am not certain -- the next being last weeks issue -- the one with Ruether on the cover. Don't have it handy to check the date -- perhaps our overseas editions are different from yours,

Well, that's all beside the point -- they are wonderful neighbors and we are all the best of friends -- though he is much older than we are --- his wife (second) is quite young (about your age, Deanie) and most likeable. They have two children -- 14 and 15. They are the ones that let us use their swimming pool last summer (Dec.) while they were vacationing at the coast.

Anyway he has pointed out several things of interest for us to see which we might not find on a general tourist guide.

On our way to the falls we visited the Motopos Hills. Cecil Rhodes is buried on top of one of these hills -- which are big granite blebs. It is a most impressive sight and we enjoyed every minute of it. We walked two miles to see a bushman cave -- it was well worth it, even with two yelling kids -- but if we had known it was that far we wouldn't have gone. Bob got some wonderful pictures of pre-historic bushmen paintings.

Coming back from the falls we visited Zimbabwe ruins about 200 miles from Bulawayo. These are fascinating -- mainly because no one knows the origin. The ruins include 30 foot walls made of cut granite -- there is no mortar at all and never has been but still they stand. Much gold and other relics have been found in them, but no real key to the mystery.

The country that we saw in Rhodesia was beautiful. We had expected dry desert country for some reason, but the forest were green and nearly all the country rolling hills. The roads are all strip roads -- that is two strips of paving down the dirt road -- at least better than no pavement -- considering the extremes in dust and mud in these parts.

Anyway it's good to be home again with our poodle, cat and hound not to mention the chickens.

Deanie, we love hearing from you and are thrilled and happy for you when you write so happily of your newly married state. You know we can hardly wait to meet Willis and see your new home.

Thanks so much for the clipping of Daddy. As usual he got around to mailing me a copy last week --