

December, 1960

Dear Friends:

Merry Christmas! Happy New Year! And a fond "hello" to each one of you. At the time of this writing we have only just recovered from our American Thanksgiving, but in America preparations for Christmas begin early so we are already watching Christmas approaching in our homeland for the first time in seven years.

We are happily settled in Baltimore, Maryland where we will live until the middle of June, 1961. Bob is busy studying at The Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health -- enjoying it, but not finding it easy getting back to academic work.

We had such an interesting trip back to the States last August. We spent several days in Zanzibar. Walter still talks about the "Kokernots" in Zanzibar, meaning the ones that grow on trees. We all got terrible sunburns from snow-white beaches; what a thrill to pick clove flowers from clove trees, which ultimately dry to make the spice one buys; the small of freshly stripped bark of the cinnamon tree is something we are not likely to forget soon. Unfortunately, the U.S. Customs officials were not nearly as impressed with our samples as we were.

Leaving the African continent we spent several expensive days in Venice. (Take our advice and never go there during the tourist season.) Then we hired a car and drove to Vienna -- a really lovely trip. From Vienna we flew to Paris for five days and then wearily home by jet to New York.

Initially there was the rush of finding living accommodations and getting everybody enrolled in school in September. Subsequently, we have been enjoying typical American living. (I am not mentioning such boring things as dish-washing, general housework, etc.) We do get a big boost from television (and our reading is suffering, but nevermind -- we may not have anything to do BUT read at our next assignment). There are plenty of good programs from which to choose. We do have pretty strict rules about week-day watching and seldom see anything from Monday through Friday but news and weather. Weekends more than make up for this, however, beginning with cartoons early Saturday morning and ending with some really good shows on Sunday night. And if there is a member of the family suffering from insomnia he can always watch the late show -- usually about 1935 vintage -- a sure sedative, but sometimes habit forming. (I've waited years to see "Lost Horizon" with Ronald Coleman. I must have been about 10 years old when it was made -- sure enough I saw it was on the late show. I managed to stay awake until the party was rescued from a plane crash and taken to the beautiful valley -- I woke up as it was ending an hour and a half later!)

We did enjoy following the Presidential campaign, and the debates between Nixon and Kennedy, not to mention our staying up half the night on election eve. Most stations telecast through the night, but we went to bed about 1:30 A.M. only to find the results still not final at 7:00 A.M.

I can't resist saying how much we enjoy central heating, but trying to convince the children that it is 20° outside when it is 70° inside is next to impossible. This is when I am trying to dress them warmly for school.

We miss South Africa more than we can say, but it is also good to be in our own country again. The children had a difficult time re-adjusting to school life here, but are happy at last. We miss the wonderful fruit South Africa produced, but enjoy OUR grapefruit. Sentimentally, we sometimes try serving our guests "English Tea", but it is about as popular as iced tea over there.

Many of you may not have heard that we are expecting the fourth little "nut" early in 1961. You can imagine the excitement in our house about this. Jan and Peggy have hardly mentioned getting dolls for Christmas they are so eagerly awaiting the arrival of a real-live one. Can't say Walter is so impressed though -- he can only think of Santa Claus coming down the chimney with trucks, steam shovel, cars and airplanes.

That about brings us up to the present. We do not know our plans for the future yet, but when June comes we will be taking our postponed leave and will load the car with sleeping bags and see America for a change -- and, of course, visit our families in the western United States.. ...have to show the children that there really is more to the U.S.A. than Baltimore and New York City.

Our permanent address after June 1st, until you hear otherwise will be: The Rockefeller Foundation, 111 West 50th Street, New York 20, New York, United States of America.

P.S. Most of you know Doctor Smithburn. Bob visited with Ken and his wife shortly after returning to the States. His health was satisfactory and they are settled in a comfortable new home. His address is:-
3339 West 42nd Street, Indianapolis 8, Indiana, U.S.A.