

Sept. 9, 1961

Letter # 1

Dearest Mother and Daddy,

I

I know you are anxious to know that we arrived safe and sound----- so now I will recount the whole trip for you, which was really very short, compared to our other journeys abroad.

We left Paradise, Calif. Friday, ~~Aug.~~ Sept. 1 for San Francisco arriving there about noon. Bob took the car to the shipping agents and some extra luggage to be sent by ship. Then we checked Diana with the hotel baby sitter, and the rest of ~~of us~~ went to the circus--the Big Barnum and Bailey, Ringling Bros. Circus. Well, Walter never shut his eyes or mouth the whole 3 hours.....in fact all three were fascinated beyond words.

The circus has changed somewhat from what it used to be---I missed the dirty glamour plus all the side shows--of which there were none at all....but plenty of animal acts, clowns, trapeze, and other fascinating and breathtaking acts--ending up with two people being shot out of a cannon. We ate the usual popcorn, snow cones and cotton candy--plus hot dogs, but nobody got sick.

I thought Walter would split his sides laughing over 3 clowns trying to paint a statue---they of course spilled the paint, fell off ladders, hit each other, slid down in the spilled paint, dumped buckets over each others heads, etc..pure slapstick, I've never seen him laugh so much. (of course, it wasn't real paint but must have been finger paint made out of soap and starch)

The dog acts were very good, and they even had cats and rats trained to perform.

The night after the circus we went to a Japanese restaurant (where Bob and I had eaten before--when you go in, you have to remove your shoes and sit on the floor. This was a bit hard on Ray for ~~he~~ has arthritis or rheumatism about like you, Daddy.

The children were so tired that they kept lying down on the floor. ~~Walter~~ kept crawling under the table.

Early the next morning we left the hotel to catch our plane which left at 8:00----It was a big Pan American jet (DC-8) ---we got to Los Angeles in 55 minutes. Had about 40 minutes there and flew on to Guatemala City. There they announced that ~~our~~ plane had to go on to Miami for servicing and we would have to change to another plane which was identical with it. (Amazingly enough there were people on board that plane on their way from Los Angeles to Miami, and Houston.)

It was the same plane that was hijacked by the maniac ^{in August} and forced to fly to Cuba--the purser told Bob about it--only they were on a different flight--to Mexico.

After a hot hour of waiting in Guatemala in a crowded little waiting room we were able to board the other Pan American jet and in two hours were in Panama (Total time from S.F. was 8 hours)

That is where we suffered---going through customs--all jam-packed into a little waiting room----with no ventilation at all. About the time when I thought I would just pass out we were able to leave in a taxi to the fabulous Hotel El Panama Hilton.

It is huge---the rooms were air conditioned, and so comfortable--after some ice cream we fell into bed and slept the clock around and spent the whole next day in the swimming pool (Sunday)--even eating there. Diana thrived---

Contrary to popular belief Panama City is cool--very high humidity but really cool...in fact after swimming and out of the sun I was cold.

Monday we went to see the Canal. It was so very interesting I just wish you could have seen it. As we approached it, it looked like two big ships were sailing across the meadow, but as we neared we saw they were going through the locks. We saw one entering and one leaving.---two way traffic. The name of the locks we visited were called the ~~Pedro Miguel~~ locks --on the Pacific side. You probably know all the facts about the canal, but I will recount some of the interesting things we observed and read while there:

It was built from 1904 to 1914, however, it is believed that Balboa, discovered of the Pacific Ocean first conceived the idea of uniting the two oceans by a man-made strait.

Charles V of Spain was the first monarch to grasp the significance of a canal to join the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. He initiated the first investigations in 1523, and in 1534 ordered the Gov. of Panama to make a formal survey of the route following the general course which the Panama Canal takes today.

From that day most maritime nations of the world gave earnest consideration to the project. Even American interest was stimulated during the Nation's infancy by such statesmen as Benjamin Franklin and Henry Clay.

The first real effort to build a canal came in 1880 when the ~~French~~ French Canal Company was formed. "This valiant effort by the French was doomed to failure and the company was dissolved nine years later." ~~with~~

"The French rights and properties were purchased by the United States for \$40,000,000 and the formal transfer was made in Panama City, May 4, 1904. The ceremony culminated a series of historical events which eventually led to the successful completion of the canal and the fulfillment of the dreams of geographers, navigators, statesmen, and traders of the previous four centuries."

Enough of this brief history, except ~~that~~ for one other quotation from the little guide book "The magnitude of the task can be grasped by considering some of the individual problems: Digging a ditch and building locks wide and deep enough to accommodate the largest ocean ships afloat (at that time); sanitating an area where yellow fever, malaria, and dysentery were rampant; building ~~10~~ homes, roads, hospitals, schools; assembling a force of workers from hundreds of miles away; bringing equipment to excavate and move millions of tons of earth and rock."

"Minglan"

from the guide book. *

"All these and many other related tasks were required, for the route of the canal lay in an area where these did not exist.

These other facts we found interesting:

The average vessel pays about \$4,700 in tolls but may save as much as \$50,000, in one voyage by cutting over 7,000 miles from one trip and saving 20 days in sailing time.

Generally withing a year's period there are ships in transit which fly the flags of 35 to 40 different nations.

Approximately 300,000 ships of every class and category have passed through its portals since it was opened to commercial traffic in 1914.

The canal is 50 miles long. It was cut through one of the narrowest places and at one of the lowest saddles of the long isthmus which joins the North and South American continents. The original elevation was 312 feet above sea level where it crosses the continental Divide in the rugged mountain range.

It requires about eight hours for the average ship to transit the canal.

A ship is raised or lowered 85 feet in a continuous flight of three steps at Gatun Locks (Atlantic side). Each lock chamber is 110 feet wide and 1,000 feet long. The length of the Gatun locks is one and one-fifth miles. There are two other sets of locks a ship must pass through, plus Gatun lake which is the largest man made lake (23 miles) in the world, and the Gaillard Cut which is 8 miles long through solid rock. The locks we saw (Miraflores) are the highest of any in the system because of the extreme tidal variation in the Pacific Ocean. They are 82 feet high and each gate leaf weighs 730 tons. Each link of the fender chain weighs 70 pounds.

4 to 10
For each ship ~~there are~~ towing locomotives are used.

It takes 2 minutes to open or close the lock gates which are 7 feet thick.

To fill or empty one lock chamber (remember these are 1,000 feet long and 110 feet wide) takes 8 minutes.

The water consumption used (and lost from the man made lakes) in one canal transit is 52 million gallons.

Well, these were just a few of the many interesting things learned during our visit which I wanted to pass on to you. We haven't had our film developed yet, but I hope it is good so you can enjoy it with us when we go home.

Tuesday, Sept. 5 we left Panama ~~City~~ by plane for a flight of two hours to Cali. From the plane window we could watch the coastline enlarge ~~to~~ or widen to form South America and then as we flew inland saw the undulating country until finally we were above the high, wide valley of ~~Colima~~ where Cali is located. We arrived at mid-day and it was hot. I thought I had been fooled into believing this was a country of perpetual of spring time, but about 3 in the afternoon it became very cool, and as I looked out the hotel window at the surrounding mountains I felt I must be in a mountain resort, except for the continual hooting of cars, roars of buses, and general confusions in the narrow streets below

What I have seen of the city so far reminds me of the little I have seen of Mexican ~~towns mixed with the~~ towns narrow streets, doorways

Well, this is certainly long enough---now one other thing---why don't we number our letters so we'll know if any have been lost---at least until we see how the mail service is.

I don't know just when we will get into our house as we have to wait for our furniture to arrive (it is coming by air--imagine,) But don't know about receiving mail at home--some say it is better to receive it at a business address. (The address you have is good.)

Well, all the children send their love--Diana is still the best traveller---so happy in an environment--unless too many strangers speak to her at once.

again our address:

I will write more news later...do write.

DR. R.H. KOKERNOT

of Rockefeller Foundation

Departamento de Medicina

Preventiva y Salud Publica

Universidad del Valle

Facultad de Medicina

John and Edith

P.S. I may save some of this information about our trip for our Christmas letter---- or is it too boring?

(Continued)

Apartados: Aereo No. 2188

~~ATA~~

CAT, Colombia

(This above address is for air mail--

if you send something by boat-mail

just put: NACIONAL No. 439

instead of ~~our~~ aereo no. 2188!

My Spanish at the moment is just hopeless---Bob so and like a native already. Water asked the other day if we were not going to speak American any more.

Jan and Peggy started to school Thursday---Jan says there are few Americans in her class, but she seems to like it. Both say it is much easier than their other school which worries me for I hate for them to idle away their time. A meeting of some kind - about half