

Saigon

April 25, 1958

Dear Mom, Dad and Joni,

Guess that it's about time I settled down and wrote you another big volume. Sorry that I'm once again later than I had hoped to be. It takes so long to get things done here and have I been swamped.

First, let me say how glad I was to hear you on the phone. It was so sweet of you to call, and I'm really sorry that I worried you so much. I'll really do better about writing. I wished that I had gotten your letter sooner about Joni leaving—I'd have tried to call you. After this I should try to call you about once a month—it's much cheaper for me to call you since the telephone charges are priced at the 35 piastres to 1 US \$ instead of the "free" rate of 73. Also will be less complicated for me to call you. Mom, when will you get back from your trip—I'll try to call you then. And Joni,, if you have a phone where you will be living—please let me know. Might send me your address too—I think you've forgotten mine tho.

In case you should want to reach again in a semi-emergency situation and can't succeed on the call—why not send me a cable—will be simpler and I think in most cases faster.

Joni, I'm so happy that you've decided to go to Calif. to school. Your schedule sounded pretty heavy—both in subjects and hours and content. I wish you the very, very best. Study hard—but not too hard. I know that it will go well for you little sharpie.

As for myself, things are hectic, but I've begun adjusting to the situation. I'll enclose another article I knocked off last night and this morning, which I'll send to APN tomorrow. If I can stuff it in, will also enclose a shortie for the NY Herald-Tribune. I don't know if they'll buy it or not—they don't seem too eager to take it. They also had a correspondent swing thro here last week, so I've got more competition, but I think he's now gone.

But perhaps the encouraging thing—maybe—is that Dong Ruth—you remember the AP Division manager for SE Asia in Singapore was in town and I talked with him yesterday. He asked if I would be interested in becoming an AP stringer—which means I would work on a daily-pay rate—based on the days I worked on a story for them, and that I could do more writing than just newsfeatures. He talked to the AP personnel manager in NY about it when he was there on vacation, but it still has to be cleared with the top-per brass there, so things are still indefinite. Have no idea of how much the pay would be—but if it goes thro, I feel I'd really be lucky. Will keep you posted on this—maybe the word will comethro before I mail this letter, tho I doubt it.

Last week, I went out to a small U. S. mil. installation outside of Saigon for a couple of days—have the story written, but there are still some details which I must check. Hopefully I can check this to the H-Trib too. because the fellow if from the NY suburban area.

Tomorrow I've set aside for necessary correspondence, including getting these articles out. Friday have an early morning apptmt, plus others. Will be a relatively quiet week-end, with a Sat. eve. date and a semi-professional one on Sunday aft. with a fellow writer. I'm planning to stay in Saigon for the next week or so, tho this sort of depends on the AP too. I hope they try to get me out of town alot. Still haven't heard anything about writing a magazine article. I have been repeatedly requesting to see The President and I just know that will come thro soon—I hope.

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Mom, thanks so much 1. for cabling the money and 2. for the huge deposit. You are the sweetest, but I really hope I don't need to use it. I hope that IF—the AP stringer job comes through here, I can earn enough that way to cover my expenses here and that my NY APN and magazine writing will act as my saving account. You really shouldn't have laughed about the 10% interest—you that's the charge for borrowing money when there's a high risk involved—and believe I'm really a risk at this point.

In case I should be ~~x~~ running short of money again, I'll try to notify you in ~~x~~ far enough advance than last time. so that you can try to channel the payment here thro the Credit Commercial bank of Viet Nam inst⁴ad of the Chartered Bank. The Chartered Bank insists on giving me money in piastres instead of travelers cheques and I really need some US currency for a few PX supplies.

But thanks ever, ever so much—it's a wonderfully secure felling. And Mom, t anks for mailing the clothes—I really appreciate it. I'm sort of in a sad state fashion-wise, tho my clothes have stood up very well. I think I may have a few cotton casuals made here, but their dressy material isn't too appealing to me. Would love to get to Bangkok to pick us some Thai silk for all of us. And of course I'm kicking myself for not getting some HK stuff when I was there.

Two other big events for the week—one disasterous and one disastrously good. I wrote Suku breaking our engagement after much consideration—purely professional reasons. I'm dating a little, but haven't met anyone nearly comparable to him. He was really the sweetest!

The second was Anna Marie, the maid I just hired who reported to work this morning—at 7 a.m. to be exact. She's a very short Vietnamese, who has worked in Vientiane for an American USOM couple. Speaks only French, which I hope will help me to improve mine.

Well, anyway, she had my bed made before I could hop back in it and by 8 had the complete aptment swept and in order. At 9 went shopping for such essentials I didn't have, like pots, pans, wastebasket, brillo, and foodstuffs.

For lunch she served me two chicken legs fried, french fried potatoes, tomatoes and cucumbers and a big mango—the most delicious fruit I've ever tasted. Supper wasn't quite as good—sort of Vietnamese style—saute chicken—mostly bones—a huge portion of rice; boiled green beans that were really good—and you know I don't like beans and tomatoes and cucumber again.

It's really a joy to have her around—but I'm afraid it's going to spoil me when I get back home. She can take care of the errands, like shoe repair. I jump out of my clothes and she has them hung up before I turn around.

The nice thing is that I don't have to worry about these domestic details. The stove wouldn't work when lunch was half-way cooked—so I just left for the AP office. She'll do my laundry, but have to buy an iron first. Scrubbed the floor; cleaned the stove, mended the bedspread and my dress etc. etc.

I think we'll get along fine except on two points—she insists on straightening up all my writing notes—and you know that can't be—and she gets up at 5 a.m. Well, I'm sure it will be good for me to get on a regular schedule as well as having someone to take care of all my little errands, which really cuts down on your energy during this hot weather. Will be glad when the rainy season starts shortly.

She showed up for work with a big suitcase—~~he~~ of all of her wordly belongings. She'll sleep on the hard tile floor, with a pillow and blanket—

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it's really unbelievable. I'm really quite lucky to have found her—and to think she found me. She came up Monday morning—said the housekeeper told her I was looking for someone.

Today, I went to the American Embassy to get my ~~passport renewed~~ a new passport—just four years ago this was issued. Guess I'm almost a professional traveler now. Doesn't seem possible, does it.

Mom, I was glad to hear that You're feeling as well as you do—but I'm still worried that there's still soreness in your side—it's been over a year now. What did Stewie say about the x-rays—you never did tell me!!! I'm sorry to hear that he's feeling so rough. I'll try to drpp him a note tomorrow.

And will try to write Gram and gramp also—I've been pretty negligent about writing. I hope things slow down a little bit—or that I get a little more efficient.

Please don't worry about my health. Believe me, those pix were taken when when I was sick-ish and I've gained alot since then—in fact am afraid I'll get fat here. I don't know how I picked up the lung virus, but it's completely gone now. And if you DON'T pick up dysentery, there's something wrong with you—it's just the expected thing. But I take my weekly diet of quinine and have an abundant supply of all sorts of medicine for dysentery, including what Stewie sent me. There's a good American dyspensary here and the military medics always give me things. So I have my own traveling medical kit by now.

Papa, what have you been doing? Are you going on the big trip too? Or can't you take it with that crazy driver and crazier back-seat one? How is the weather and have you started field work yet. I do wish I could take you up on the Seattle World's Fair—can I let you know later. It really sounds like a bawl. As to how long I'll stay here, I will have to wait and see how the situation looks in a little while. And Papa, thanks so much for the moolah. I really hope I don't have to use it. I'll bet you thought you were finished supporting me, didn't you? Thank you so much. You'll really never know what wonderful parents I have. I wish I could even offer to help with Joanie's expenses, but that's impossible as I guess you know. Please keep me posted carefully on Mom's health. I hope that you are feeling fine.

Well, it's now 9:30 p.m. and If I'm going to start getting up at 6 in the morning, It'd better start getting ready for bed. I know you'd never believe it, but I've actually been working pretty hard, tho I'm not up to my NY efficiency yet.

Do write real soon. I made an extra carbon to send to you at Betty's, but it dawned on me that it would miss you.

Mom, I'm in no rush, but if you could send some of my other summer "dressy" clothes—not casuals—at any time, I'd appreciate it—like maybe those two cotton suits, the pink and orange sheath, maybe the black silk sheath with little bolero jacket—nothing very good or very hot. They'll look sharp here and I just as well wear them out.

would also need the accessories to go with ~~it~~ them. And could you send me about a dozen pair of knee-length hose—they're impossible to find here and it's just too hot to wear a girlde, tho maybe you could send me some full-length ones too for when it's a must. Nylon deteriorates so much here, but can't find any good ones. And please keep track of the expenses—PLEASE! Did you include my strapless bra. Mom, thanks a million. Don't rush about doing this, but I think I will need some additions here.

I forgot to tell you about the lovely Easter cards. Thanks ever so much. It made me so homesick to think I wouldn't be coloring eggs that year. I hope you dyed enough for me, too.

Joani, I hope you have a most wonderful experience—as you undoubtedly will—and maybe learn a little on the side. HA. Mom and Dad, thanks a million for simply everything. Please write soon.

All my love,