

Kunming, December 22, 1940

Dear Gladys and Charles,

I am typing this in the car out in the country on an air raid alarm so it probably won't be awfully coherent. Still I have been promising myself this letter for so long that I shall finish it somehow. We enjoyed your Christmas card and letter so much. Since we came back we have often said that since you decided to leave you left when you did at the best possible time. Life in Kunming is completely changed in the past few months. The railway is definitely closed now. The Laokay bridge was blown up shortly after we came back the first of September. Then when the Japs came into Indo-China en masse the rails were taken up by the Chinese as fast as they could work. For a time people who wanted to leave by rail made the journey, walking the distance between where the rails ended and Laokay. Some travelers transferred from the train to the river but after a lot of robberies and killing that was stopped, and now no traffic is allowed at all.

we had a perfectly dizzy trip after leaving Hongkong. First the boat had to anchor right outside the harbor for two days and nights for a typhoon to pass. Then after bouncing on to Haiphong we had to wait an extra day outside that harbor for no known reason. We didn't mind particularly except that my supply of dummies naturally ran out and I had to resort to ship towels. That didn't sit so well with the purser but it was a case of that or else--- Indo-China was absolutely a furnace. We had to wait over the weekend in Haiphong to see what was missing in our supplies that were in a locked godown. You may remember that a case of my grocery supplies from Shanghai was missing when I arrived at Hongkong. I checked at Haiphong and found that of all things it was my precious coffee-- well, to cap that, we opened several other cases in the godown only to discover soap, salt, tinned goods and much miscellaneous stuff vanished, and in many cases pineapple juice, tomato juice, even molasses tins, punctured, the contents drunk and empty tins placed carefully back--! To ease the pain of that some kind official in Haiphong sent us up to Hanoi by car. Very pleasant except we both were in a state of shock from the antics of the Annamite driver. The metropole was full of Japs strutting around but mopping their brows from the dripping heat. We were in the same wilted condition but it afforded much satisfaction to see them suffer so.

Kunming looked like heaven after an impossibly difficult trip up the railway. Landslides, delays of all sorts, rain, leaking roofs, etc. etc. Our furniture came up shortly after we arrived, carried over the mined Laokay bridge piece by piece, and then our car that we had bought in Hanoi came. A 1939 Chevy considerably the worse for being a demonstrator car in the tropics, but believe me we're glad to have anything on wheels these days.

Chris has probably told you of the bombings so I won't mention those in detail. Anyway, you know firsthand plenty about such things, don't you! We've had some severe ones, the worst being Oct. 13th when this end of town got it. Over by the Colonel's house was completely pulverized. The consulate was quite shaken too, ceilings broken out, door frames jarred loose, windowpanes and mirrors broken. It was an ill wind but it did some good in that it shook so much dust down from the ceiling and up from the floor that the consulate looked clean for awhile. We had and still have urgent alarms almost every day. We always have to run for it because we never know where the planes are headed for. Actually the time our hair turned gray was when the Eurasia with Lutz piloting was shot down just a few hundred yards from where we were flat in a ditch. That morning we got at 7:10 a.m. the urgent alarm without any preliminary whatever. There was panic. People ran in all directions and the truck drivers--always mad anyway--simply went popeyed with fear. We had managed to get to the circular road when Troy pointed thru the windshield and said "what are those?" I said, "Oh, that's just four birds." Then "birds, hell," said Troy, "those are pursuits". We tore out of that car and into the ditch, the amah scrambling down with the sleeping baby, and by that time the bullets were hitting all around. Then after downing the Eurasia which flew over us trying to escape the pursuits turned and machine-gunned Tai Ho Kai. Why there weren't hundreds of casualties I can't understand for the street was jammed with people and cars caught without warning.

The reason we are so fearful is that we never know how much time we have when the siren sounds. Sometimes it is a couple of hours and many times planes are here in 15 minutes. You probably have heard that Yunnan~~gi~~ was caught unawares and 20 planes burned. The radio operator here who failed to relay the raid signal was executed. I suppose you know Scotty resigned. He bought a couple of trucks and plans to make a fortune in a short while. He went to Manila for Christmas, taking Betty a star sapphire as big as a wash tub and simply knockout. Hesston is gone. He wrote a book which was accepted by the Saturday Evening Post. Adair is leaving tomorrow and probably won't be back. Preston will go too if Adair doesn't return. The whole force seems to have lost heart when the colonel left. Carney is now in charge and according to Chris the other boys don't particularly like it. She no doubt keeps you up on the aviators but I thought I'd pass on what little we hear. Carney has the Angeles house. Did Chris tell you Carney made a will turning over everything to Rose in case anything happened to him? And that Rose eagerly went searching advice as to whether the will was legal? Rose has set up a restaurant in the country catering to the people who run out on air raids and cleared \$300 the first day.

Steven is fine. He went to Burma over the road and was gone a month. When he came back we told him we didn't know whether he really looked thinner or if it was merely a haircut. He looked like Xmas to us because he brought us 6 lbs. of coffee. You've no doubt read of the two missionaries and their son who were murdered up at Chanyi. Steven was gone so Troy had to send McGeary up to investigate. Poor McGeary came back weaving from the effects of the local plum wine and muttering about blood and brains all over the walls. The people had been killed with shotguns and beside the actual physical mess it was a very nasty case because local officials were thought to be involved.

Kunming isn't the lovely peaceful place it used to be, Gladys. All the German women have gone except the Jewish refugees. There are no American women left except Mrs. Cox and me, the only men being Steven, McGeary, Carney, Williams, and Mr. Arnold. After the first bad bombing everybody just cleared out. Many French women went to Saigon, Mmes Aubouy, Janvier, Fayard and her darling baby, and perhaps others. Mme Patoux and Mme Rouffet are living out in Chenkung. We see a great deal of the German sisters. Since their place was demolished, 3 bombs landed in their compound, they stay on Yuen Tung Kai with Sister Kuegunde's dental office in the German consulate compound which took over Siemens' place when Kamm left. The Germans have taken over a temple a little way out of town where they concentrate on raids. Eurasia took over the unit of buildings in Lung to Tsuan which the Academy Sinica had, including Phyllis and Su-cheng Liang's house. They have all gone to Szechuan. The Liangs wanted to sell us their house but we weren't interested particularly.

Yes, Polly's death was a shock. We saw him at the Chiang Mon-lins just two days before he died at Lo-tzu, some miles out where there is a mission hospital. Dolly Liang tried to keep Sarah but she ran away all the time so I expect Prideaux has her now. P-B moved from his consulate up to Franklin's house near us, where Blackwell was living, but on moonlight nights he sleeps out in his office at the English garden. He is very lonely. This is a terribly depressing and nerve-straining place now. Bob Winter, a university professor and old friend of Polly's has taken over his work. The Crepins have gone to Shanghai, I think. Their successors, the Gandons from Chungking, have arrived and are very pleasant.

I seem to have left Philip until the last. Chris will tell you that he is not a handsome baby and I have to admit it, but he is cute. He's so full of beans he's never still, has four teeth already and is simply adorable, we think. Thank goodness he has perfect health else I would have to leave. He will soon be able to wear those precious little suits you gave him in Hongkong. I am resisting strenuously the advice to return to the U.S. but it may be that I'll have to go. I don't want to leave Troy. I'd nearly lose my mind worrying over him after I've seen the havoc of air raids. Since I'm cramming in details I'll mention we saw Zack lately and he's fine. Eckert finished his house then the officials sealed it up and won't let him live in it--

No more room, and the all clear has sounded, so we're back to the city now. With lots of wishes for happiness in the new year, and much affection,

Kay + Troy + Philip