

# Foreword

Pegge Parker lived two lives. Her first life was chronicled in *Slow Boat to China*, which told her story through her personal diaries, letters, photos and clippings from her journalist writings. This second life, *Slow Boat to Pakistan*, is also told from her diaries and letters while she embarked on her new career as a State Department officer attached to the United States Information Services.

In editing her writings for these books, in several parts of the manuscript there will be two versions of her adventurist life. One version is what she wrote in her diary; another version will be the story that she wrote to her parents. Because the two versions reveal different reactions, they have been included.

The diaries were discovered after Pegge had succumbed to Alzheimer's, thus her story is being told. Pegge did write about her early life as a columnist. Her early columns have been collected in the book *'Teen Topics*. She also wrote the book *Alias Pegge Parker*, which included the stories she related while she was working as a freelance journalist and newspaper columnist for the *Omaha Sun* newspapers.

**READING NOTES**

*Slow Boat to Pakistan* begins the second life of Pegge Parker. Her first life was chronicled in the book *Slow Boat to China*. Because there are several references to individuals and places in *Slow Boat to Pakistan* here are some of the names you will read in the text.

Douglas Mackiernan, Pegge's first husband. A Vice Consul in the American Consulate at Tihwa, Sinkiang Province, China. The Vice Consul status was a cover for his work for the CIA. Mackiernan was the first CIA agent to be killed in the line of duty, and his star is the first one on the CIA's Wall of Honor in the lobby of CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia.

Robert Dreesen. He was also a Vice Consul in Tihwa with Mackiernan. In this book he is a Vice Consul in the American Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan.

J. Hall Paxton and his wife, Vincoe. He was the Consul General at the American Consulate General in Tihwa. He made an escape across the Taklaman Desert to India in 1947, with Dreesen and a group of men, women and children.

Dorothy Ann (Simpson) Wilson. Also referred to as "D.A." was Pegge's friend from her days in Fairbanks, Alaska. D.A. worked at the radio station while Pegge was a reporter on the newspaper, the *Daily News Miner*.

Eva McGowan was Pegge's friend in Fairbanks. Pegge also met her on a trip to Northern Ireland in 1947.

Clare Boothe Luce and Al Morano. Clare Boothe Luce was a novelist and Congresswoman who became a good friend of Pegge's when Pegge was a star reporter for the *Washington Times Herald* in D.C. in 1942-44. Morano was Luce's aide and later became a Congressman from Connecticut.

Tihwa is also known as Urumchi on maps of China.

# Introduction

Margaret Witwer “Peggy” Lyons lived two lives. The younger daughter of a middle class Catholic family in Harrisburg, PA, she attended public schools. After graduating from John Harris High School, she went to New York to become a “famous” actress. Her mother had been a child actress and her grandparents were actors on Broadway. Her uncle, H.C. Witwer, was a World War I war correspondent and later wrote sports novels in the style of Damon Runyon. He also wrote scripts for movies in Hollywood and had acting parts in several movies.

In her own words at the time—“I had hoped to be the next Sarah Bernhardt but it was not to be.”

After a brief stint as a Powers model, and writing radio scripts for the *Woman’s Home Companion*, she returned to Harrisburg. After writing a series on furniture for an advertising section, she persuaded the publisher of the *Harrisburg Telegraph* to let her write, in 1940, an advice column for teenagers, “Teen Topics. She also took a pen name, Pegge with an “e” and Parker, “because everyone had a Parker pen.” Her daily column became so successful that she became a celebrity,

interviewing with the likes of General Jimmy Doolittle, the Duchess of Windsor, and Rita Hayworth.

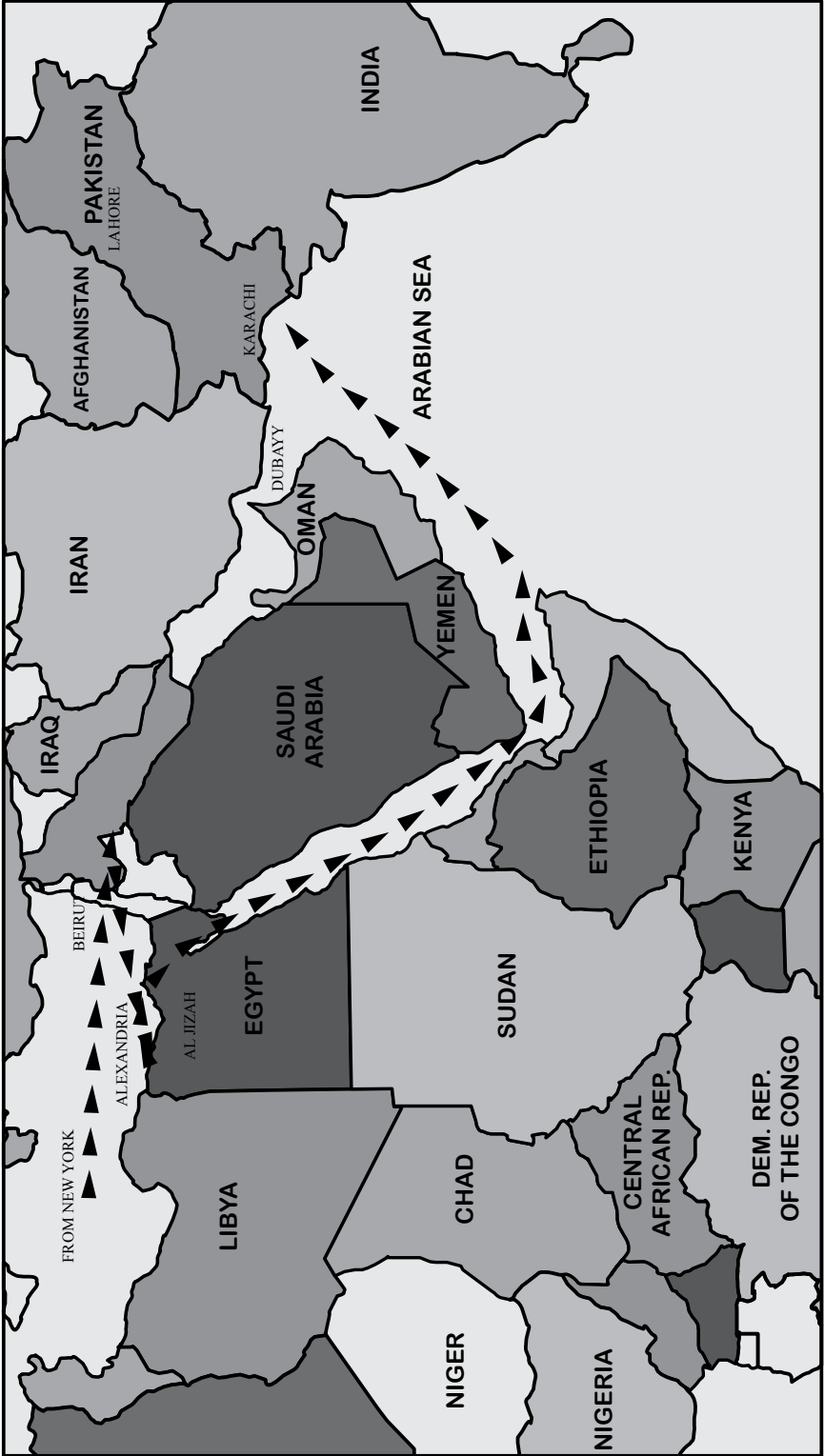
After writing over 700 columns, she took her clippings to Washington in 1942 and was hired as a reporter on the *Washington Times Herald*. Within six months she had been promoted to Women's Page editor and soon became a "star" reporter. It was wartime, and Pegge wrote stories about training with the paratroopers, riding with the tank troops, and even slogging with the infantrymen. She also continued writing about women's issues, posed for fashion photos, and became a "celebrity" culminating in being a Camel Cigarette poster girl, though she never smoked.

*Slow Boat to China* takes you on her journey from Washington to Alaska to China and beyond. *Slow Boat to Pakistan* continues her journey across the world.

SLOW BOAT TO PAKISTAN



*From New York  
to Karachi, Pakistan*





1951

**JUNE 6, 1951—JUST OUT OF SUEZ, ON THE RED SEA** (which as I write is a most exquisite dazzling blue a-churn with frothy white caps)—What is travel—feeling or seeing this is a world apart. It has been a most wonderful escape for me. At least I can thank the State Department for making it possible. The best job on the LHJ [*Ladies Home Journal*] would not have been compensation for the experience, both human and historic.

Part of the delight of the long days at sea has been my extreme good fortune in two good companions. One is a missionary doctor (but more philosophical and earnestly broad-minded than any I've ever met before). She is Dr. Dorothy Jefferson of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. I admire her quality and shall remember her charming, patient example in courtesy and consideration, even if I fall short of her model sweetness. She is going to VELLORE to teach physiology at Christian Medical College (founded by the incredible IDA MAY SCUDDER). My other constant companion is a stroke of good fortune I can hardly account for, and his passage on this ship has been a thousand-fold blessing. He is Bill WARD of the Cleveland

(Ohio) Museum of Art. He is a specialist on Ceylon, and Buddha is his ideal in philosophy if not religious adherence. Our conversations have been 1001 subjects of mutual interest. He is also skilled with a camera and has instructed me at length how to handle my new ARGUS. Best of all, his travel experience ashore makes our port stops perfect. We have planned carefully, pooled our money, and gone our separate ways (together), losing the missionaries which comprise the remainder of the passengers. With Bill I have the perfect non-romantic complement which (alas, poor darling) I never had with Doug. The re-visited scenes of the *President Polk* trip bring him to mind with regrets that the circumstances of our trip were so strained it brought us into conflict. Well, so much for thinking thoughts.

It took us 13 days to reach BEIRUT, LEBANON. It was a sun-washed, brilliant scene—a clean, wealth-conscious city, half French colonial, half Eastern—sophisticated, prosperous, built upon the slopes of the great and beautiful Lebanese mountains. Moslem women moved along the streets wearing black chiffon head veils through which their features were still discernible. My eyes and heart went out to the children, particularly one little blithe-hearted girl of about four with a blind eye.

Having made the decision to go to Damascus, a few missionaries, Bill and I set off in a car (money exchange 35 cents U.S. to one Lebanese pound). Our first stop, however, was at the American Embassy, a large, beige-colored European edifice set in a brilliant flowering garden. There we met BOB SEATON (I believe that was his name), who gave me some mail and gave both of us some wise guidance for Damascus: where to eat, shop, etc. Briefly, too, he said Lebanon is a country with a driving force to acquire WEALTH—great riches at any cost. The government leaders are all in on “deals.” One of the wealthiest controls the dope and narcotics “industry,” which flourishes. “Trying to pin down anyone in authority for confidence and trust, or sound governmental statesmanship,” remarked Seaton, “is like trying to pin Jello to the wall.”

The car drive over the mountains to Damascus was interesting and picture worthy. Olive groves, silver-green lacy leaves against the brilliant sky. Small summer resort cities with hotels built like mud-brick garrisons or forts. Further on the border—Syrian customs officers collected one pound entry tariff for our visit, and from Doctor Jefferson (Canadian passport with a Lebanese visa), they took, with much parlay francais, a special additional sum (about \$2.50) because she had a Lebanese visa. (Were I not deep-lo-matic, I too would have had to pay. Bill and the others, with no Lebanese visas, paid nothing to enter.)

On the Syrian side we passed sheep herded by Moslem-turbaned, barefooted herders. Occasionally a camel caravan moved down the shoulder of the very excellent highway. I was reminded on that highway that it is of utmost military importance. It is well maintained and is narrow for double-lane traffic, it is marked with roadside abutments—good for troops' ambush. Also, all along the highway were built small, square, adobe-looking storehouses, ideal for storing arms and supplies. Johnny Walker signs, in English, also dotted the way.

Damascus itself was true East—Middle East—Moslem East. The outskirts were pleasantly green. The street was wide and reasonably well maintained—houses with gardens—school children tagging along, little girls with huge butterfly bows on their hair—many of them with sun-bleached fair hair and light eyes. In the center of the city the buildings were bleached beige—the streets narrow and though paved, dirt and filth filtered through the air. The atmosphere is of a demi-modern trade center, too far inland to have felt the impact of international ideas and a progressive spirit.

Bill and I detached ourselves from the others and lunched in splendor at the Semiramis Hotel, which was quite European (complete with immaculate tile powder rooms). There was an attractive dining room, music of a sort, and champagne (the tariff for each, sum total, was about \$4 U.S.). After lunch, which was delicious, we set out

with a hired guide for one of the best shops in Damascus: ASFAR & SARKIS at 59 HAMIDIEH ST., which had brocades, brassware and silverware. (It advertises that it ships goods to all parts of the world.)

Here we found a dimly lit, quiet shop, its floor cushioned with heavy rugs. Huge silver, copper and brass trays melted my eye; visions of one as a coffee table dazzled me. But the prospect of carrying it back to the ship defeated me. I spent \$34.50 before Bill dragged me away. Our guide hurried us through an ancient bazaar arcade (covered overhead with dark, metallic, arched roof)—wagons, donkeys with bells on their harnesses (Ah. Tihwa—how familiar), Moslem women in black chiffon veils, babies dressed for March weather, but wearing silk satin brocade sunbonnets! Here and there a Syrian police officer whose presence restricted our use of the cameras. Minarets shot up here and there—a slender, pointed spire marking the Eastern faith of the ancient city renowned also in Christendom.

We went last to the Grand Mosque. We tied big sloppy shoes over our own shoes and were spared having to go barefoot. The mosque was older than old—spacious—pigeons often rose in a fluttering gray swoop over our heads. Women and children sat in small chatty groups near the entrance. We took pictures, then entered the enormous sanctuary. Worn but beautiful carpets covered the floor, huge sparkling chandeliers hung low from the vaulted ceilings. Here and there groups of men sat about, seemingly enjoying the cool retreat and passing the time of day. Some others sat in a little separate part, reading from the Koran.

Most fabulous is the little ornamental crypt in one wing. This highly ornamental and green enamel-roofed crypt is said to contain the head of St. John the Baptist. Colored-glass windows lent added drama to the interior of this truly fabulous Mosque, which has at times been used as a pagan temple, a synagogue, a church and a mosque. Some of the mosaics, which have survived destructive fires

and one earthquake, date to the 7th century. They were fascinating but not terribly awesome for beauty.

We took a fast detour to an avenue of shops called the “Street Called Straight,” which, though it is now a bazaar area, was once associated with the story of Saul, whose vision of God occurred on the road to Damascus, whence he became blinded. He was led into the city and a man, a Christian who lived in the “Street Called Straight” rescued him and led him to his conversion to Christ, his missionary goal and his immortality as St. Paul.

The ride back over the turning and twisty road, after the heat, champagne (plus being up at a quarter of 6 a.m. with no sleep the night before) and exhausting day proved too much, and when we got back to the ship at 8 p.m., I was on the verge of collapse and quite ill. The blessed doctor took over—ice pack, pain-killing tablet (more potent than aspirin), sleeping pills and kindness Mother herself would not have been more sweetly solicitous. I felt a pang of remorse that, in Damascus, Bill and I had deserted the missionaries to have our gay champagne in private.

Beirut is a lustily sophisticated city by night with one lovely hotel, the St. George, and some lively casinos. We were all set for some, but I conked out.

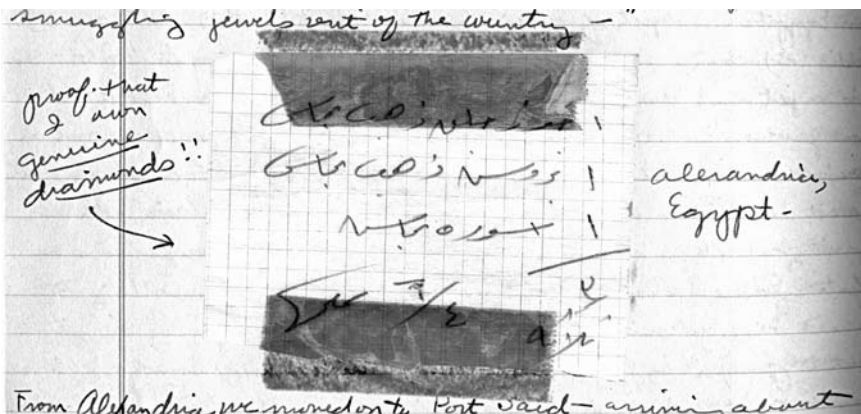
We sailed early the next morning for Alexandria on the north coast of Egypt. Bill and I called first at the Consulate. We were inhospitably and disinterestedly received by the Consul General, Robert Quincy, who told Bill the museum in Alexandria was barely worth seeing and he had never been there. I sensed his attitude of don't-take-my-time-for-this go to Thomas Cook's across the street. We went to the museum and were enthralled. Bill, of course, made everything terribly interesting to me. Roman, Grecian, Egyptian relics. I was entranced with a display of the most exquisite terra cotta figures—Roman ladies circa 5th century A.D. Lovely rose, white, turquoise and gilt colorings, exquisite faces and hair.

We lunched with the steamship agent, a Syrian with Egyptian citizenship. What an earful. Over shrimp curry, he gave me the rundown on his country. The setting was charming, suggesting Naples—large, modern apartment buildings, facing a half moon beach and shore drive. The Mediterranean rolling in its jade breakers churning sudsy foam. But the description of Egypt's government and its King was depressing. Only Farouk's first queen, who lives quietly in Alexandria, is revered and loved by the people. They think the present queen is just a kid who is in for many a heartache. Also we heard that the reason Farouk always wears black glasses is that he has lost an eye. Various attempts are afoot to make him more popular with the people, but so far, no success.

Bill and I wandered into various bookshops, later returned to the Isthmian Line office and invited the young son of the agent to join us for dinner. He is an Egyptian subject of Syrian extraction. Eddie (23) (EDWARD CHALHOUB) is in a sense, young Egypt. He had a seaman's build and in a jet-eyed, dusky, physically powerful way, handsome. He had loved a poor Jewess for three years. She had been his amour while a servant in the house, so the love affair ended and the girl went off to Cairo with her family.

Restless, insecure, unsettled in his profession and future, Eddie looks to America, but his father is unwilling to assist him (financially) and in style as becomes a young Egyptian out to prosper in Golden America. Worse than his personal problems is the threat of draft in the Egyptian army—the plight and pay of the Egyptian “non-com” has Eddie in despair. From this glooming prospect, he went into Egypt's corrupt governmental measures and practices. His concluding statement was, “What we need in this country is Communism for two years to sweep the country clean.” It was just a remark of an inexperienced young man, but it hit hard because I could see it might very well take as violent as Red IRON to sweep E. Royalty and Co. from ruling power.

In Egypt as in Beirut and Damascus I noticed the people were very eager to accede to the demands and ordinances of the police—a swarthy copper had but to roll his midnight eyes in our direction to have our guide or driver reach for his papers and wallet for “buckshees.” Egyptian police must be small tyrants. Incidentally, when we went ashore to dinner I wore my sparkly pin, bracelet and earrings (from Wash D.C. dept stores—total cost about \$10). We were stopped at the waterfront gate and my “jewels” were registered. “What is the value?” the shirt-sleeved Egyptian “customs” man inquired. I told him. He looked at me wisely, paused, then began to write the following slip in Arabic. “Maybe so,” he said blandly, “but I think they are real diamonds. This paper will protect you so no one will think you are smuggling jewels out of the country.”



Attached to her diary was a small slip written in Arabic that Pegge owned genuine diamonds.

From Alexandria we moved to Port Said, arriving about 8 o'clock. Our garrulous but good-natured Captain Ryan permitted us to go ashore for one hour. Off we went gleefully in a bobbing row boat. Ashore, after a curbside haggle, we hired two gharries and rode around town. This fascinating no-man's and every-man's land I

recognized from my 1947 Polk trip, but I mistook it (see Blue journal for 1947) for Suez.

Arriving on the first day of holy Ramadan, we were in for a show. The whole town was out in fiesta mood—sidewalk tea (cognac) cafes were jammed—WITH MEN, of course. Thru the bazaar district we went, lights blazed, fire crackers went off—then into the food marts—vegetables abounded—fruit—string beans, squash, purple egg plant, round disk Moslem bread—the people seemed to gather we were on a joy ride, they laughed and smiled at us. As I once wrote before, this city is teeming with fascination and stories. I should love to spend 3–4 months absorbing its atmosphere and yarns.

**JUNE 7, 1951—in the Red Sea, off the port of Jiddah.** The heat has at last claimed us. Slept on deck last night, under a dazzling host of stars ... heavenly!

Dearest Ones,

Sorry, there has been no time to get out a dispatch before this. We have been in and out of so many ports. I understand this is a hard port to mail letters from, but I will try the Department's pouch. I did receive your letter in Beirut, also one from the Macks enclosing snaps of the twins. I'll forward the pix later. (The Bottoroffs tried to send me a book they had for my bon voyage present, airmail to Beirut, would have been \$9 postage so they are mailing it to Lahore!) I suppose both babies, George and Ann's have been born by this time. How blessedly kind of George to come round and pick you up. I will have to find something lovely for Bobby somewhere.

Now to events. We arrived in Beirut after 13 days crossing. It was one of the most beautiful and utterly, utterly FABULOUS cities I have ever seen! I wore my pretty aqua Bonwit dress (which is perfect for heat, and sheds wrinkles). Bill and I stuck together in our plans. (I have never enjoyed any man's constant company, and gaiety for much, bar none!) We pooled our money, and he did all the figuring

(Lebanese currency is in pounds and piastres, about 35 cents US to one Lebanese pound). We hired a car for five of us, two other passengers (missionaries—the Doctor whom you met), Bill and I. It took about three hours of climbing hills, or mountains, up to about 6-7000 feet. We took lots of color shots which I will send back to the states for development and then to you. Everything on the first roll will be Damascus or the road to it. The highway was well paved, but every now and then a herd of sheep or goats went past. Another time, a camel caravan, one with the whole family aboard including two adorable babies and a flock of puppies. I have shots of them also.

Damascus, you know, dates back to the beginning of Time, almost. St. Paul was on his way there when he beheld the vision of God, remember? And from “Saul” he became the Christian Paul, getting his start in Damascus. Also the head of St. John, for which Salome danced, is housed (“buried”) under a fabulous chapel INSIDE a Mohammaden mosque that covers a full city block! Without relating reams of history and pages of description, it is hard to tell about Damascus except the once over lightly. (Also it must be 150 in the shade here on deck off the port of Jiddah. We went ashore this a.m. and returned, melted and dissolved.) Bill and I had been zipped off to a swish place for lunch. We had our tongues hanging down to here for champagne (French imported, of course). We left the missionaries go their way, and we dined in merry splendor, splitting the check (\$4 each including tips and champagne). First came a beautiful omelet with tomato-onion sauce. The table was set with fresh flowers, nice linen and heavy silver service. There was even “music,” popular French numbers played on a piano. After the omelets came something that made me think of Esther for Syrian cooking—must be related to Armenian.

Squash was the main ingredient, about as big as zucchini, scooped and filled with rice and ground meat, and covered with a sour cream sauce! This was just the appetizer. Then came a small filet steak with potatoes put through one of those waffle pressers (they come out

like waffled 50-cent pieces). Then a silver tray of fresh fruit, cherries, apricots, bananas was put before us and Arabian or Turkish coffee in little cups! We had marvelous fun. The champagne was divine and served from a silver bucket, etc.

We then hired a guide, a Syrian dressed in herringbone tweeds despite the heat, and set off for the bazaar, which reminded me of metropolitan Tihwa, bells on the donkey harnesses, the women veiled from head to waist in black chiffon, the men wearing a sort of mother Hubbard of sheer cotton or silk, and thick wadded turbans.

In the bazaar, which is covered with a heavy arch of metal roofing, there was shop after shop, one right after the other, people and donkeys and wagons all shoulder to shoulder in the street. We stopped in one shop we had been told was the best. There I parted with nearly \$35 US!! I bought copper trays, a brass tray inlaid with silver and copper and figures and fauns worked into an exquisite design. One silver tray with an enameled figure on a horse (looks like Genghis Khan), a Syrian style pitcher of copper with a silver wash, a brass flower pot and a Persian box you would go mad over. It is a Persian painting (remember in Washington, the exhibit of tiny figures?). This is an old love poem worked out in trees, flowers and figures on horses. The painting is on ivory. The box itself is a mosaic made of inlaid copper, ivory and other stones. The box was only \$4.50 US (the only one in the shop). But the trays were more expensive. I saw trays like T. Wannamaker had for his coffee table, but could not have carried one away. My diplomatic passport saves my having to pay any duty.

From the shop our guide dashed us off to the Mosque, which is just incredible, as you will see in my color films if they come out as they should.

The ride back over turny, twisty roads was exhausting. (I had been up since a quarter of six that morning). Although Bill and I had dinner reservations at the Hotel St. George in Beirut, I just caved in on the ship when we got back there at 8 p.m. The Dr. (Jefferson)

who couldn't have been sweeter, put me to bed with a sedative and a sleeping pill, and ice packs on my head.

Bill made me tea and brought it in on a tray. He still had \$10 of our combined money in Lebanese pounds, which had to be spent before the ship sailed the next morning. So dead as he was, too, he went back on shore and toured the grog shops. He bought cognac, a bottle of Shenleys, wine and a huge bottle of Vermouth, all but the Shenleys, French imports, and just about 1/3 the price of US purchase! Every afternoon we "invent" cocktails. One we named the Suez Sling, because it was dreamed up one sweltering day going through the Suez Canal. Our favorite, however, is the "Jiddah Approach" made of fresh grapefruit, orange juice and cognac! Devine and out of this world. We have just polished off two full tumblers of the above!

We sailed from Beirut Sunday morning and headed for Alexandria. We went ashore mid-morning and called on the (American) Consul General who received all of us very routinely, not even suggesting a drink, tea or a postage stamp. In fact, the Alexandria Consulate cooled me for any more calls! Despite my sending in my engraved card, I was received as faint heartedly as tho I were a second file clerk!

Anyway we hurried out of the Consulate to the Museum where Bill, in his best Museum manner, explained every rock and rill to me. It was terribly interesting and the exhibits there were historic marvels. We took pictures. Then the agent for the Isthmian Steamship Line took the Captain, Bill and me to lunch at a Casino built right on the shore. Waves rolling in under us. Shrimp curry and beer! Marvelous. He told us the gossip and scandals about (King) Farouk which would waggle the ears right off your head. The Egyptians adore and worship their lovely 1st Queen. "She is an Angel," they say. This present one, they shrug their shoulders, "She's just a kid dazzled by it all. She means nothing to Farouk."

Alexandria itself is a European looking town, but things are expensive. There is little to buy as they are not skilled craftsmen. Bill and I spent most of the afternoon browsing through book shops.

That night, with Eddie, the young son of the Company Agent, we went ashore to see the sights. Eddie (a heavy set, intense, Tyrone Power) took us in a horse carriage to Alexandria's Luna Amusement Park. We were so amazed and overcome.

We laughed like fools. Flying horses, airplanes that whirl out, fun houses, mirrors, games, everything. I won a little red doggie for Posey!

Dinner gong, must dash.

It is hot as Hades here but I am determined to finish this and mail it tomorrow. From here Eddie took us to an Egyptian restaurant where he ordered grilled pigeons! We were a bit amused at this but decided to try 'em anyway. They were delicious, came served on a large platter bedded in greens that looked like water cress.

The police at the dock gates had to be reckoned with indeed, only my "deep-lo-mateek" passport got us by fairly well. Egypt with its government now is a country I want not a molecule of!

The very next day we began the run to Port Said at the entrance of the Suez Canal. It is a French-English town. We had one hour about nine o'clock to go ashore. We happened to be there during their special holiday, Ramadan, when Moslems fast by day and eat after sundown only! This being the first day of Ramadan, there was a sort of 4th of July air about the place. The whole town was out, eating on the sidewalks, the bazaars, the markets, Mosques, etc. were teaming with people. Not since my "early" days in China have I seen such a sight.

We hired a tonga or gharry (horse-drawn carriage) to ride us all around. I think this was the most marvelous side excursion of the trip so far! It is seldom one gets ashore here, but our Capt (a garrulous Irishman named Ryan who doesn't think much of the State Dept. or the Consulate on his run, where little help is given, etc.) just let

us go. We hired a little wobbly row boat and away we went, five of us! Some of the houses in Port Said were sumptuous with gardens, balconies with Eastern grille work, which had a black lace effect. The best hotel in town had a sidewalk cafe at which thirty Westerners were imbibing.

As you approach Suez, on the right, are two huge neon signs: one, advertising KLM Airways, and the other, JOHNNY WALKER (scotch). There were five freighters lined up to go through the Canal when we approached. For some reason we were given the lead at about four knots, which is just a swan glide really. No faster speed is permissible because the churn of water would either flood the canal or pull down the sides. It was a dazzling night of those low hanging stars. We were all up until one or two a.m. just watching everything. Then at the crack of dawn, everyone was up to see the Canal by daylight. I had gone through the Canal on the *President Polk* at night, coming the other way. (Traffic moves one way—ships from the Mediterranean side go single file at a good safe distance between. Midway down the Canal the water widens into lakes. Here ships can be lined up and tied up while traffic is coming the other way is given the right of way.) We stopped two or three times to allow others to pass. Suez, still in British hands, is very carefully and precisely organized. We had three different pilots and it took us from 16 to 18 hours to go thru. It was marvelously thrilling, even tho I'd been thru before. All afternoon gliding down Suez, Bill and I sat on the deck in our cushioned chairs, taking color shots, watching the scene which, oddly enough, reminded me of Sinkiang. Villages we passed looked like Tihwa, mud-baked houses, lush areas of trees and gardens, and then bleached barrenness.

There is a train that runs from Said to Suez, but not right along the Canal. We saw it in the distance. A good paved highway runs about the ridge, and it was busy with gleaming American cars, motorcycles. Occasionally, in the fields, we saw camels and goat herds. We also saw a shark eeling thru the jade green water, and at

frequent intervals, great washouts in the border of the ledge of the Canal. It is a tricky business maintaining the Canal, and do you know it cost our steamship company \$8,000 for us to go thru one way! (The price is set by the tonnage!)

Emerging at sundown in Suez, we glided past European homes with nice gardens, hedges and flowering trees. I took many pictures so you will see them, too. Then we entered the Red Sea and came down to Jiddah where we are now unloading. We have 20–30 Chryslers on board. You'd think the oil-rich Arabs just ordered them out of Sears Roebuck. This was the first taste of H E A T so far. In fact, last night the Dr. and I slept out on deck (told you this ... too hot to think what or how I'm writing, but by two or three a.m. I had to go for blankets. It has been amazingly cool for this time of year.

You can think of me on my birthday or a few days afterward having my Red Sea soirée! My party and dinner served on deck. I take back what I said about the ship in my last letter. The food is exceptionally good, and I have moved over into the Dr. cabin and into a much better bed, a very comfortable one indeed. Oh yes, Madame, whom you met, did two sewing jobs for me, took up the hem of my pink housecoat-robe and fixed my pink Nylon blouse so that it fits better.

At the Consulate I got a *TIME* magazine, this week's issue. Good to have some news. Also at the Consulate we learned something about a price-war between Macy's and Gimble's. Alas, to hear it out here after I bought my things. The consul in Jiddah here sent a cable on to Karachi for me, alerting them of my arrival and requesting hotel accommodations. I hope somebody shakes loose. I'm not too impressed with any helpfulness so far. I have not yet been offered a cup of tea by any of them. Maybe they were more cordial (in China) to correspondents. Well, if all goes well, I won't be with them for long. So far it has been hard to get much material, just flash impressions. But when I am squared away in Lahore, I'll dredge my memory, sort out my thoughts and see what I can cook up on paper (for the *LH Journal*, of course).

Well this is a very higgledy piggedly letter, but Bill and I are going ashore tomorrow, and we'll get this mailed off. I'll write next from Lahore. Seems incredible I'm way out here. Miss you both to tell everything to in person! and other wise. Much, Much love and kisses, P

**JUNE 10, 1951—JIDDAH—How—how to describe this incredible ancient Saudi (pseudo) holy, MIDAS—MECCA of Saudi Arabia?**

At a state room temperature of 100 degrees with humidity to match, I am too overcome to turn phrases adequately. So I'll just let go as it comes. A treacherous coral reef harbor kept us about half to three-quarters of a mile off shore. So our first glimpse of this holy pilgrim center was across the brilliant turquoise water. The intense blues of sky and sea were broken by gliding dhows which rode with skill and safety over the reefs and swift-changing water depths.

We went ashore in the morning, landing on a cement pier where pilgrims to Mecca disembark. Just beyond the landing was an archway of Eastern architecture, arch after arch in this shape. It was painted a bleached light blue. Because this was the 4th day of Ramadan and the heat of the day was upon the bleached city, the harbor ramp was littered with sleeping forms—boatmen, fishermen, coolie dock workers. The Embassy was in a rather ancient dim-lit shuttered building. A cable was sent to Karachi announcing my arrival. (I do not anticipate help or even hospitality there. There was none in Jiddah except from the Embassy's friendly Italian-American special services man—SAM MAGGIO.) The heat rose intensely at noon, so we hastened back to the ship. Jiddah's time we learned is reckoned by the sun. Every morning the clocks are set by the sun although business firms observe another more standard time.

The filth, dirt and dust of the "streets" was familiar to me, but also appalling. One ride through Jiddah with a short walk through the bazaar and it was necessary to wash EVERYTHING from hair to

SHOES (my red “cruise” shoes are hanging up to dry this minute a la—from Saks 5th Ave to Jiddah). We spent one day doing the city—hiring a car and a non-English speaking or savvy driver (cost us about \$ 1.50 each). We saw on the edge of nothing and nowhere the king’s palace—beyond a compound wall the roof was done in a lovely lattice work of rose and jade green—the roads in town are narrow and wide—donkeys, goats, carts and Chryslers intermingle (on the Chrysler angle—our ship is just loaded—dime-a-dozen style—with them—and over the side they go—in the unloading by the filthiest, liveliest, cursing Arab—into dhows). We stand agog as dhows laden with huge crated Packards, Chryslers, Dodge and Plymouth cars went ashore—over the reefs—easy as a swan taking the afternoon air.

“My God,” gasped Bill beside me at the rail watching. “I wouldn’t even take my bicycle out in my sailboat and look at these—loaded to the waterline, almost dragging in the water—and with the help of Allah—no harm done.”

The buildings of Jiddah are a weird but intriguing mixture of European and hideous ultra-modern—painted white, beige or wicked green. The windows are closely shuttered. Rents are fantastic. The one hotel worthy of European patronage costs about \$30 US a day, with meals. Food—most or all of it imported—is quite expensive. The poor people live on dates (filthy and fly peppered!!!) and Moslem bread baked in round disks—Coca Cola signs were everywhere—along the highways in Arabic and thru the bazaar.

Bill and I sought to buy some tiny token for Red Sea soiree—what a time—haggling in the best China style. Finally for about 7–8 cents each, I got 10 cheap glass tea cups marked on the bottom with the star of Islam and a bit of Arabic script. I also bought a Moslem hat of bright blue satin worked with gold and white silk threads (\$1).

At one point I was surrounded with small children begging. Bill had about 15 cents in change from our tea cup purchase—but giving it away was overwhelming—once they sensed my intention,

a hundred black hands fell upon mine. There were one or two little girls in the crowd and I tried strenuously to find their hands in which to enclose a coin. Alms giving is an overpowering gesture.

We returned to the ship—hot—dirty—thirsting—when the Capt. invited Bill and me to join him ashore to visit SHEIK ALI A ALIBEZA—Ali, as he is called, is wealthy in the almost Arabian Nights sense. About 31–32 yrs of age, powerfully built, tan skinned but not swarthy—with an “Allah” van dyke—he was I really do believe the handsomest mortal man I have ever seen. As he showed us thru his new “modern” offices, I asked him about his children. He smiled down at me (he has three—and his one girl is his favorite)—the strong electric lights of the office caught in those midnight eyes. The thick curled lashes. He presented an Arab portrait in position, personality and bearing. On his head was the white scarf (called TARBOOSH or SHMAKH like smock). From his 6-ft frame fell a cream silk full flowing immaculate gown. Everywhere he went little underlings trembled and were nervously eager to perform his wishes or to anticipate them.

Ali’s business passion and administrative zeal were worthy of an American-educated Arab. Ali pursues his business with swift command and ever-expanding scope and profits. What business of the ports—sale of Fords, etc. he does not control—his cousin, uncle, brother-in-law or someone else has—“all in the family.” Ali told Bill his employees work 8 hrs a day. There is a time (punch) clock—if they are late or absent, it is deducted from their wages. The co. has an employees’ hospitalization plan—pays one month’s vacation salaries. Ali has also established a school for boys in Jiddah.

As we strolled thru the shops, I paused to chat with an intelligent looking, Western-looking Indian who is head of the spacious, immaculate and extremely well-ordered car repair and garage section (the Crown Prince’s car was there—jacked up). The Indian had formerly been with General Motors, had trained in Detroit and driven all over the US (I thought of George Wallace).

“Oh,” cried Mr. FAZAL R. CHINOY, “America is the best country in the whole world.”

I waved aside the obvious compliment. “Why tell me exactly WHY do you say that?”

“So much for so little—in your country—everything is clean—good—clothes—food—highways—health—and for so little. There is no other country in the world like America.” We contrasted this with the wealth of Arabia—where Chryslers and gleaming limousines, buildings are the exponents of prosperity. Mr. Chinoy quietly agreed. So expensive it is to live in Arabia, only dates and bread for the common man—irrigation, if possible would transform the bleached ground into a growing paradise—anything will grow here—this country’s religion is partly to blame. The King is a great and humane person—but his sons, relatives, others in power are wealthy, oh so wealthy they are.

Ali came out to the ship and we visited on the deck. He is a tremendously fascinating and conflicting anomalous—I showed him the little book I bought in Alexandria—“Heart of Islam.” He perused it moodily and he became lost in it. So, on an impulse, I gave it to him. He is a man of great drive for wealth and power at all cost, with an Arab’s most burning sense of rightness that Arabs should control and run Arabia, politically and commercially. He would be ruthless, cruel and on a whim of compassion, generous and beneficent to the poor and down trodden. His words (when his mind is diverted from business) must range the full gamut—and again, I say his face is the handsomest and most fascinating I have ever seen.

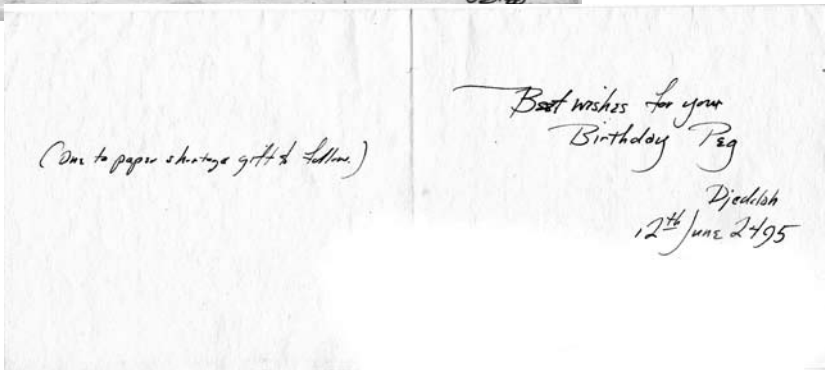
There is one govt hospital which Ali said isn’t safe to go to. There is a call station for an ambulance and there is a large “modern” hospital in Jiddah, but Ali admitted its location is unfortunate—in the heart of the dirt and filth of traffic, donkey carts of emaciated, primitive people. Ali’s own home—five miles on the edge of town, must be a palace. We were not invited there tho his wife is American.

**JUNE 13, 1951—SAILING DOWN THE RED SEA—remembering this day—and Doug—a year ago.** It is incredible that I should be here for this anniversary. How swiftly my life was changed by the ringing of a phone one year ago. How lamentable also is my heart's remembering Doug. When I retrace in my heart the love I once bore him—and its sad loss before the loss of Doug himself. His disinterest in Mike and Mary (Beloved, beloved ones! Darling hearts of mine!) which all but broke my heart.

Then the revelations of Frank Bessac—(which I can yet prove perhaps when I see Dreeson and Vasili in Delhi) the estrangement from Doug, when he is gone, to go on bearing his name which I still feel is NOT MY OWN—and the indissoluble tie to him thru the babies. It would take Doug himself, returned from eternity to restore my belonging to him. Even to pray for him. Alas for my emptiness—is difficult. He is so lost to me in every way, beyond mere death. Forgetting him seems to be the only way to close a door on a whole experience that began in a mad defiance of every convention restraint and ended in such tragedy—loss of love and life. But oh sweet pitying forgiving heart of God: For I do have my sweet minx Mary and my golden high-tempered son—my beloved Mike.

I have just reread the year's recordings and although I have dated the final phone call as June 14, I am almost positive it was today, June 13. Anyway—the anniversary has been remembered.

Last night was my birthday—and for well it turned out. I awakened to find the attached note taped to the wash basin: Bless her sweet heart—the day passed uneventfully. I went to the Embassy to call on the political officer. He was casually cordial—a tall, pale looking, phlegmatic chap wearing heavily lensed glasses. He informed me Ali is not so powerful or wealthy as he appears, and the Bechtel pier is no second-rate grafting contract job. Ali has run it poorly and not maintained it once its operation came under his control. Ali's American wife is kept hidden in true Moslem style so long as they remain in Jiddah.



(Due to paper shortage gift & follow.)

Best wishes for your  
Birthday Peg

Djedish  
12<sup>th</sup> June 2/95

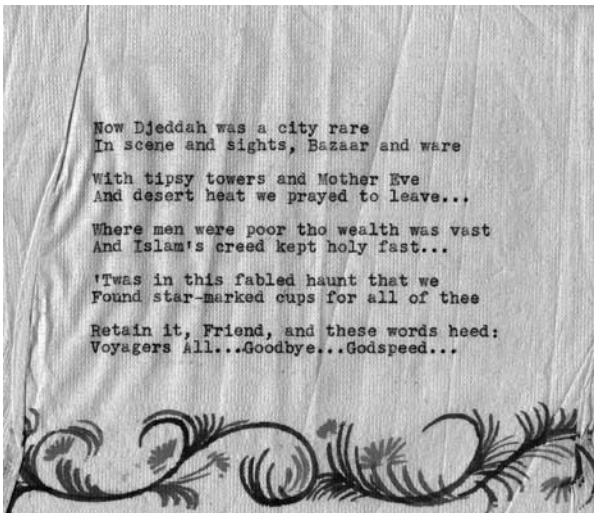
The birthday card for Pegge taped to the wash basin.

More significant the political “expert” (name: John BREWER) described a subtle undercurrent in Moslem affairs tending toward a veering away from America. The obvious dissatisfaction and general sentiments of the Palestine dispute, Brewer surmises, are mere fronts for some more submerged motives. All the while this discussion ensued, Brewer was served, and then, with enjoyment he sipped a tall cool drink, in my presence, with no offer of one for me (temp. at

least 100 degrees). Not even water was I offered. His wife, whom I met briefly, was equally casual in her manners.

I came away raving, but Sam Maggio, the “special services” lad whisked me off for a coke, the only tangible hospitality received en route! My birthday was observed with a cake (12 candles) and little presents—a pretty apron hastily stitched in dissolving humidity, a nighty also stitched in haste and heat—and most charming of all, Bill’s sketches of DJEDDAH. I was very grateful—and am glad some return will be made when we give my Red Sea Soirée!

One more note: I’ve got a wonderful idea: thinking how I could “write” to Mike and Mary about my trip—the only medium they could understand would be Nursery Rhymes. From across the Sea—Beirut, Egypt, Damascus, Jiddah told in rhymes. It has selling possibilities and will bear composition as soon as possible.



A poem written by Pegge's friend Bill Ward.