

TITLE: Montevideo to Kinshasa: If you can afford the time, plan to fly!
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NOTES: Conference begins 19 June 1968. Excerpted from letters from home.

MONDAY THE SOMETHING—ABOUT 18 OR 19

EN ROUTE LAGOS TO KANO—WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT!

More from the roving father en route to Kano and hoping to pass this to someone on this BOAC flight who might post it from London. But there's more to the story.

Left Montevideo with ticket thoroughly reconfirmed—had a 7-hour or so layover—overnite to Dakar with a few hours sleep—3 more hours in Dakar waiting—then on to the milk run from Dakar to Accra stopping in the Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast en route—8 darn hours. Well, since there is a 7:00 P.M. curfew at the Lagos airport, the flight stops in Accra. So—overnite in Accra and departure at a reasonable hour on Sunday morning—on time yet! I heaved a sigh of relief as I got into Lagos for here I was with suitcase intact and fully 7 hours early for the next flight. Surprise! Air Congo had posted in all the books a 17:30 departure—two weeks ago, they notified the airlines it would be 1400 (since they never on time anyhow, the whole bit seemed a bit academic). Well, this week they decided to leave at 8:00. George [Lythcott] and Bill Foege found out when they wired their ETA to Kinshasa— [Jock] Copland I suspect wired back to say—no, no, it's earlier! For the first time in anyone's memory, they even left on time. Great! Quickly found a Pan-Am flight due to leave in 3 hours and scheduled to land in Kinshasa. Nope! The Congo cancelled their landing rights 3 weeks ago for Sunday and Monday (PAN AM thinks it was because PAN AM got the **by** and Air Congo didn't—even Pan-Am looks good compared to Air Congo). So I proposed flying with them to Johannesburg and stopping at Kinshasa on return—(they must land, so I thought, since Air Congo doesn't serve Johannesburg)—nope!—The Congo cancelled this also. Found that UTA¹ has a flight on Monday from J'burg which stops but in South Africa you either have to have a visa or a confirmed ticket. So we started out to find the UTA man. Oops! It's Sunday—office closed—no one about until 5:00—after Pan Am left. So I proposed going to J'burg, gambling that I could get on—oops!—South Africa exports you on the same plane if conditions are not fulfilled.

Took a taxi to the Lythcott's and began combing air travel guides—almost had one that would get me in Monday late by flying to London and Brussels but missed connections by 30 minutes. Tried the

¹ UTA (Union de Transports Aériens) was the largest privately-owned independent in France and its 2nd largest international airline. Established in 1963, it was absorbed into Groupe Air France in 1990.

Embassy plane—thought we might try a run from Ft. Lamy, Chad, but Embassy couldn't get use of plane until Tuesday so that was out. Everyone was most imaginative but no way in the world to get to the Conference for the Tuesday A.M. opening. The best—this—a flight today (Mon) to Kano, overnite in Kano, and on to Kinshasa tomorrow evening about midnite—somewhat after the cocktail party I'm giving.

Moral of the story—don't fly from Montevideo to Kinshasa or, as the Pan Am agent said, If you can afford the time, plan to fly!

At any rate, saw Jeannie [George Lythcott's wife] and their one-year-old Julie plus Rafe [Henderson], Stan [Foster], and all the troops. Morale is good but I sense they have only a faint sense of the miracles they have accomplished. Tony **Mason**, it seems, is one of the shining lights, by the way—an incidental and rambling thought. 0 cases in Nigeria last week but 7 this week in 4 areas—all under hot investigation—cases now being reported in 1st and 2nd generation—fantastic! The last smoldering embers are still a bit elusive but the embers appear to be getting fewer all the time. Everyone working like hell. Have had a management analyst from State Department looking carefully at the program—partly, they think, to recommend reducing the Regional Office! Apparently, however, he has fallen head over heels in love with the program and wants to see everything expanded. This, in the face of various programs of education and agriculture having been wiped out totally. It gives me a nice feeling, somehow. What does one do for an encore?

So much for now, the stewardess says she will post this from London which ought to save maybe a week in transit. We're coming into Kano now so until later—probably on my return—

20 NOVEMBER 1968

BACK AT LAGOS

I see a Swissair flight about to take off for Europe and here is the terminal so a quick note and a hope someone will post this. That's right—back at Lagos!

Last night the Sabena flight which was to travel from Kano-Kinshasa was announced to be 4 hours late. The manager put me back in a hotel room at Sabena expense so that I might have a little sleep. Nothing much happened. I went to dinner at the home of a Chinese sales manager for a textile firm whom I happened to meet thru another WHO type who just happened to be in Kano. Wonderful meal! Returned and turned in only to have someone else pile into my room—somehow we both got assigned to the same room. So up at 2:00 A.M. and back to the desk to straighten that out and to see what was known about the flight—nothing! At 6:00, our Sabena friend showed up. Seems there is a problem in landing after dark anywhere in Nigeria—he chased up the commander and got agreement—cabled same to Sabena who acknowledged. All night be spent at the airport but as of 7:00 this morning, nothing had been heard from the Sabena flight! They contacted KLM and other planes in the area but to no avail. So back on the plane to Lagos and an attempt now to get to Kinshasa via Pan-Am. If successful, we arrive at 4:00 P.M.—I add the “if successful” advisedly. Meanwhile have picked up another conference participant also stranded in Kano so now I have company!

So now, I have been since Friday noon trying to get from Montevideo and since Sunday morning from Lagos Charge! While initially ready to crawl the wall, the best I can say now is that I've become most fatalistic. Let us see what happens next—God knows!

Oops—all the Swissairs have disappeared. Let me see what I can do now.