

Missão de Chissamba  
March 14, 1949

Dearest Mother and Olive,

Am writing to both of you this time, and trying to answer some of your questions in a way more satisfying than the way in which I gave the boys measurements, which we still haven't in really good order. Betty says that she has sent their heights, however. Good, I'm happy that someone in the family is giving you the news. But there's more to come even.

Better give it to you now, just in case you get the pictures from Rochester one of these days and ask the same question that Mother Lu asked after seeing the pics we had forwarded to Boothbay Harbor. She wrote and wanted to know if a smock over here meant the same thing as it does back home. We have written to tell here that it means exactly the same thing, and that the new addition is expected about the end of May.

But please don't be upset by all this. Everything so far has gone very nicely. Betty was somewhat ill coming from Portugal, but otherwise has had not too uncomfortable a time of it. She's getting bigger all the time of course, and has an idea that it will be twins or triplets, but we fully expect that there will be only one. There are good hospital facilities here at the mission. Dr. Walter Strangway is ~~next~~ expected to arrive before too long from his furlough in Canada and will have charge of mother and child. Everything else is in good order. Water supply good, although we take the pains to boil the water sufficiently to kill any harmful bacteria, at least so far as we know. We're following the advice of the doctor at Dondi and the nurse here looks in occasionally, or asks about the condition of health. There is also an expert in laboratory tests, in making them and reading them, here at Chissamba. So far as we can tell everything should go as smoothly as at home. We expect to send you some snaps of the youngster about July.

Other big news, which will be about where we're going, you'll get sometime the first of May. We'll know after the annual meeting of our colleagues in the last week of April. But we do not anticipate moving until after the baby has come and Betty is about again. We shall ~~still~~ be here studying the language of the Ovimbundu.

Now to some of your questions. The Mitchem's address is: ~~Rexx~~ Mr. and Mrs. A. Leonard Mitchem, Guilundo, Quissico, via Lourenzo Marques, ~~Portuguese~~ East Africa. Letters on the air forms are very readable. Why a police force in Nova Sintra? It's the administration post for a large area, and the colonial system of government requires that there be a police force there. School system needs more space than this for explanation. Remind me again about this if I don't get to it soon. There is no high school there. Neither of the boys has learned much of the Ovimbundu tongue yet. They talk English with their playmates and Portuguese with the house boys, so far anyhow. But we do hear them now and then singing and noting snatches of what has an Umbundu sound. About their helmets and your question, if they wear them all the time. The answer is, no, and mostly they use them in the rain. Odd, isn't it? Sorry, now we have no strawberries. But haven't had any here, so we don't miss them as yet. There are many other kinds of fruit. Thomas is not sucking his thumb as much now as he was when we arrived here. Daddy can manage the bike now, even ride it with one boy on behind and one on the bar, not the handle bar, the cross bar. About our house boys and what languages they speak. All of them speak Umbundu, needless to say, but house boy and laundry boy speak a good bit of Portuguese. Cook and gardener understand some, and speak it, but not fluently. We have still another boy to work outside now. He speaks a little, and understands a good bit. Well that seems to be most of them to the first of the year, and enough for tonight, since I'm growing sleepy and making all sorts of mistakes. Our Coleman gas lights are good, but it's now an hour and a quarter past our midnight, which is nine o'clock out here.