

## No Evergreens For Christmas Trees In Southern Rhodesia Bush Country

Marilyn Eck, Rotary foreign exchange student in Southern Rhodesia, had the privilege of speaking before a large crowd of National Affairs people, who heretofore had heard men high in public office, and were delighted to listen to a young girl who could bring them a fresh viewpoint.

Marilyn, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Eck, Shavertown, is having a rare experience during her year in Africa. Don't miss her account of Christmas back in the Bush.

Excerpts from Marilyn's letters home, follow:

November 30, 1961  
My big speech at National Affairs was changed from December 12 to November 28 on six days notice, so I was rather tied-up getting it prepared. I had a rather large crowd, and everybody said it was fabulous and I should go in for public speaking. I don't know how true this is but I told some amusing incidents and the audience thought they were funny. I spoke for 29 minutes and then answered questions for 15. It was raining outside and I had to shout to be heard.

On December 8, I'm going for a five-day trip to Salisbury, Umtali, and the Eastern Districts, Fort Victoria and the Zimbabwe Ruins. Umtali is supposed to be the prettiest area in Southern Rhodesia. I'm going with the Rotary president. This is the largest Rotary district in the world. Last Saturday I had tea with the District Governor.

We won't be home for Christmas. We're going up to the Chobe again. Doc wants a holiday. We'll be there only six days. Then I'm going to Salisbury for a week in January before school starts again. School closes December 8.

**Compliments On Speech**  
Well, compliments are flowing in from all over on my speech, and my picture in the paper. I got a letter from an African 23 years old who said he thought it was wonderful that I wanted to see life in another part of the world. I am the youngest person ever to speak at National Affairs, and people have told me my talk was much more enjoyable and informative than the talks of many adults who

have spoken there.  
A girl at school is interested in flute but has no books. Schools here don't have bands or teach anything but piano, and the kids are envious of me because I learned to play in school. You should have seen them when they heard my State Band record.

Remember the dress I made for the sewing contest last March? Last week I took out the sleeves and remodelled the buckle. It makes a nice change. I wish I could wear some woolen clothes for a change. I knew there must be some advantage to having cold weather. Congratulate the guys on the football team for me. I think it's great. And the kids having intramurals. Why couldn't we have had them when I was there?

**American Policies In Africa**  
December 11, 1961  
The rainy season has arrived, and with it the largest collection of pests I've ever seen. We are sleeping under mosquito nets and fighting a battle with fleas and mites. Another pest is ticks. You sit and itch like mad in public, dying to scratch.

It's getting to the point where I'm getting sick of defending American policies in Africa. Africa is being carved up like a piece of choice meat. In early November I met our Vice-Consul from the United States, and I don't think he knows anymore about what's really happening than Toby (Hall's dog) does. I get so angry at times I feel like writing to President Kennedy. I think he should get some competent people here before it's too late. He can't possibly be getting correct information on African affairs.

People here are fed-up with America as an arrogant, rich, know-it-all nation. You know, Tshombe was the only one making any progress at all in any part of the Congo. He had an organized government going in Katanga, but just because Katanga's wealthy, it would be a crime to break from the Congo. The fact that the central Congolese government is in absolute chaos means nothing. I'm sure that if Katanga had no wealth, the Congo or the United Nations or anybody else wouldn't care whether Katanga left or not. Forcing the Congo on Katanga will set it back years in progress as well

as financially.  
People here have a lot of respect for Mr. Kennedy, but their P.M., Sir Roy Welenski, is a living legend—and when he criticizes the United States, people don't just laugh it off. If Sir Roy says the U.S. is ridiculous, the U.S. is ridiculous. It's as simple as that.

I hope to meet Sir Roy in Salisbury next month and try to get a clearer picture of the whole situation.

**Christmas In The Bush**  
I suppose you want to hear all about Christmas and New Year's. I'll start with December 23. Our last performance of the pantomime ended at 10:15. When I got home I took half an hour to get my make-up off (I was a Chinese boy) and then worked on last minute Christmas decorations, the paper stars that Grandma Templin taught me to make years ago. At midnight, everyone who had been sleeping got up, and we all hopped into the Land Rover or Volkswagon and headed for the Chobe River.

At 7:30, we arrived at Victoria Falls, ate a breakfast of cold chicken, sandwiches and tea. At 12:30, we reached Kasane, where we unpacked the Volkswagon and put everything into the Land Rover for our last 12 miles to cottage. (We couldn't take the Volkswagon because we were afraid it might get stuck in the sand just when elephants decided to charge.) What a sight! Four people in the cab, two in the back with the baggage, and Rod and I rode in the front. I had instructions to scramble into the cab, and Rod to squeeze in under the boat on top of the Land Rover, if we were charged by elephants or attacked by baboons.

We arrived in Serandellas about 1:30, unpacked and ate lunch. Rod and I took the Land Rover and went into the Bush, hunting for a Christmas tree. At one stage we found a decent tree, stopped to chop it down, and heard what we thought was an elephant trumpeting. We didn't stay around to find out. We finally found another tree and headed back toward the cottage. There are no evergreen trees here.

Lynn, Rhona and I began decorating it. No electric lights, just my paper stars, a few Christmas tree balls, tinsel and icicles. We sprayed snow on the base and the stars. Incongruous, don't you think? Temperature at the time was 70 degrees.

We listened to Christmas carols for a time on the transistor radio before going to bed.  
After breakfast Christmas morning, we crowded around the tree, and the African servants were given their presents. We all sat around the tree and Mrs. Thompson handed out a present to all of us, and then everybody in the family took turns handing out one round of gifts until all the gifts had been opened.

Rod and I went fishing. I caught a 14 pound barbel, a 4 1/2 pound bream, and a 5 pound bream, two of the largest bream ever caught here.  
The dining room was decorated



Mrs. George Ruckno is joined by Thomas P. Garrity of Harvey's Lake in admiring a Certificate of Merit awarded to Mr. Ruckno by the Home Builders Association of Luzerne County for his contributions to the organization, including a term as first president of the organization.  
The Rucknos are residents of

Shrineacres. Mr. Ruckno is one of the area's widely known home builders and contractors.  
Mr. Garrity is the new president of the Greater Wilkes-Barre Real Estate Board which works cooperatively with the Home Builders Association of Luzerne County in assisting persons planning or purchasing new homes.

for Christmas dinner, balloons and streamers hanging from the ceiling. At 7:30, we sat down to the traditional Christmas dinner, turkey, ham, mashed potatoes stuffing, vegetables. Mr. Thompson brought in the plum pudding, blazing with brandy, flames shooting up from it. Everyone was anxious to come across a charm or money, stirred into the pudding when it was being prepared. I got a horseshoe, for luck, and a tickle (a coin worth about 4 cents).

**New Year's Festivities**  
January 15, 1962  
Now for New Year's. At 8 p.m. on New Year's Eve, Rod, Colin, Jeff and I went to a party at some Italian Count's place. I met Robin there and taught him to jitterbug. At midnight we all joined hands and sang Auld Lang Syne, and then we danced until 2:30. When the party broke up, about sixty of us went to the Matapos to see the sunrise. We got there around 3, and sat in cars or around fires until 4, when Robin and I decided to climb up to Rhodes' grave on top of World View. Cecil Rhodes is buried there because he thought it was the most beautiful place in the area. Matapos are stone hills where bushmen's paintings have been found.

A cold wind was blowing, so we went down again until nearer time for sunrise. Then at 5, we all climbed to the top and stood there freezing until 5:45 when the sun came up. Rod, Robin, and I went back to the Thompson's for breakfast. By 1 p.m., I was in bed. We had gotten home from the Chobe River one and one-half hours before.

fore I went to the New Year's party. Chris, Robin and I went to the movies at 7:30, then back to Robin's home at 2. Man, was I beat!

I told you I'd tell you about Boxing Day. It's December 26, the day when all the milk boys, newsboys, etc., come around for their Christmas gifts.

Since we were up in Chobe, we missed all that. Instead, natives came around asking for gifts.  
I went over to Salisbury last week and met Sir Roy. He refuses to live in Government House. His home is very simple. We talked about his garden, dogs and grandchildren most of the time. Lady Welenski and I laughed over our days as tomboys.

Right now I'm staying with another family in Bulawayo for a week. You should see how we dress for dinner—heels, earrings, the lot.  
School begins again the 23rd. Seems like we just got out.

Ask Doc Jordan if the Rotary Club can arrange to finance an African Rhodesian as an exchange student. I know Scranton wants one, and I've found a suitable girl but she can't afford to pay her own expenses. Also ask him if there are any Negro Rotarians in the U.S. The Bulawayo Rotary Club says why should they admit Africans if the U.S. won't admit Negroes? Say hi to everybody for me. I still haven't caught up on my letters.

Love Marilyn

## School Secretaries To Meet At Lehman

Luzerne County Association of Educational Secretaries will meet tonight at 8 at Lake-Lehman High School to hear a discussion and see films on the "Proper Method of Filing in Schools and Educational Administrative Offices." President of the Association is Eleanor Smith, Kingston High School. Vice President is George Stolarick, Lake-Lehman Schools.

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Mrs. Shirley Updike, Hunlocks Creek, won a 23-piece set of Rogers Bros. Silverware, \$50 value, at the Globe Store, Luzerne, last week. The silverware was awarded to Mrs. Updike, because she was a customer of the Globe Store, Second Floor.  
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