

As I pass the Political Adviser's desk again, he is still lost in thought. Must be a tough report this time. I hope he finishes it by the time the bag closes at 12 o'clock.

I notice the stenographer typing busily at her desk. It must be a letter to her boy friend in Canada as no one ever gives her letters for the bag till about 5 minutes before it closes. Her desk is in a little corner near the Commissioner's office and the only time we see her during working hours is when she brings in the coffee each morning.

I notice the Political Adviser still in deep thought. I suppose when one is a Foreign Service Officer one must expect difficult problems.

And so the morning goes on - phone ringing - visitors coming and going - wires being received from the Indian runner and wires being despatched. The Cipher Clerk, in his little room no one else can enter, sticks his head out occasionally to say hello. The Corporal guard on the main door announcing distinguished visitors, and another Corporal coming in and out with messages for the officers... such as going to a nearby store to buy toothpaste, or delivering flowers to a ranking diplomat's wife.

And finally the 12 o'clock siren blows from atop the post office a block away. At the same time the Political Adviser rushes out with his despatch for the bag - just in time! As he leaves I glance at it. "Ref. your numbered letter etc. The radio I ordered last November has still not arrived" The steno rushes out with her last-minute letters and the bag is closed. It will be taken to the airport at one o'clock.

One o'clock comes and time to quit for lunch. There are 8 Army fellows staying in my hotel and we usually eat together. After lunch we sometimes go for a swim in an excellent outdoor swimming pool at the Club Sportif or just siesta in the afternoon. Both of these past-times I find equally enjoyable. In the evenings we may go back to the office to listen to the Zenith radio or play cards. We have a 16mm film projector and often watch films in the office after the evening meal. Tonight we have been invited to the military camp in town where the Indian soldiers are quartered. They are showing an Indian film, which should be interesting.

..... "Get out of the sack 'External' or you'll be late for work again this morning!"

"Yes, Sir, Your Honour, Mr. Corporal".

EASTER WEEKEND IN THE VENEZUELAN ANDES

Even though it all happened months ago, Elizabeth Drew-Brook and I occasionally still find ourselves skidding around precipices, being overwhelmed by mile-deep chasms and confronting blinding clouds on narrow roads high in the skies. Can't seem to get that Andes trip off our minds - we are even dreaming about it.

Although we had been planning this trip for some time, expecting a band of five carloads to make the trip, at the zero hour there was only 1 car, 3 Canadian girls and 1 Swiss boy who refused to go unless he had another male for company. Luckily, with only 10 minutes notice, a friend from the American Embassy came to our rescue and we started off at noon on Easter Thursday. From Caracas, which is 3,000 ft. above sea level, we climbed to Los Teques, a lovely little city 3,000 ft. higher where the air is cool and clear and frost is not unknown. How strange when tropical Caracas is only 30 minutes away. From the mountainous Los Teques we descended along an excellent highway to a very fertile and tropical valley where one sees fields of sugar cane, market gardens, bamboo and palm groves and orange Bucare trees brilliant against the dark green countryside. We quickly passed through the city of Maracay only stopping before we reached Valencia to buy a stalk of very cheap cambures (bananas).

We passed a number of mud huts with thatched roofs with tiny, naked children at the doorways and the usual assortment of mongrel dogs. We travelled quickly and on the new highway near Barquisimeto reached the speed of 90 miles an hour, which seemed somewhat surprising for we expected the interior roads of Venezuela to be rather rugged. Night fell quickly as is usual in the tropics and beyond Barquisimeto we found ourselves on a lonely gravel road in the llanos country (plains) with a full moon in the black sky.

We seemed to travel for miles without seeing habitations of any kind and were wondering if we had taken the wrong route when suddenly we came upon a little white-washed store with two glaring light bulbs dangling from the porch. A group of llaneros in white liqui-liquis (the national costume of Venezuela which resembles an intern's uniform) and