

The Moluccas
20 March 45

Dear Carol,

If you want to see some Plain ad Fancy Acquaplaning done, just drop down to this island some afternoon-- holding on with both hands, one hand--even no hands. That's me. And almost able to ride on the flying board standing on my head. Could, I think, but I find it difficult ~~when~~ breathing with a mouth full of salt water. I was the first of the group to try riding the 'plane without holding on. After getting my balance perfectly, I relaxed my grip on the rope halter and then let go--expecting to pitch headlong into the waer. But, by some miracle, I stayed erect and didn't fall off until I began trying to skid the board sideways. Then, of course, I lost balance and pitched off backwards into the sea. Our boat doesn't go fast enough to suit us, so we increase the speed of the 'plane by skidding sideways on the outside of the curve as the boat makes a sharp turn. That's when we get most of our tumbles, of course. The board tilts a little too much and begins to scoop up water. Then the board flips over sideways and off you go. Usually I hang on to the rope halter and climb back on the board without stopping the boat, but ~~when~~ sometimes the board goes into a dive when it turns over. Today I hung on and the board dived. I swallowed a lot of water before I got back to the surface after finally turning the rope loose. Sometimes we ride two on the board and today both Captain Johnson and Captain Shear rode together without holding on. For a very short time only. I was at the wheel of the boat and I swerved sharply. The result was as usual.

Water sports dangers are at a minimum here, on account of the density of the salt water. You couldn't sink if you tried. Of course, though, we always turn the boat immediately when someone tumbles into the water, and speed back to the place he took the dive, just as a precaution. Johnson and Shear are very fine swimmers--and I'm considerably better than when we hit this island. I like the water very much and think my almost daily swims are helpful in keeping me fit. I'm one of the few fortunates not to have developed any kind of "jungle rot"--skin disease or infection--and I think it's because I get plenty of sun and salt water.

I made a night jungle march last night and crossed a river on a raft made of brush with my poncho tied around it. It was easy--just let the current of the river swing me across at an angle, guiding the raft with a rope a swimmer had tied across the water.

Well, here comes the rains again--I'll have to scot back to my tent to drop the "storm curtains" (poncho and shelter half) around my bed.

Lots of love--and give Nan and Sue and Inez a hug and a kiss for me--and Gene, too, if you can catch him in a corner.

Your pop, Mac