

Letter from A.G. Trevenen James to his Parents
12 & 13 January 1942

TRANSCRIPT

with annotations by John Barnard
(updated 14 Apr 2021)

On the train between
Bangalore and Delhi
12th Jan 1942

My dear mother and father,

I regret not having written for some weeks, but I hope you got my letter announcing our arrival in Peshawar after a five-day road journey from Quetta.

Little Doekel was loving Peshawar when I last heard from her. On 24th Dec I got a phone call from Air HQ asking me to jump in an aeroplane and report forthwith. Poor D. had been so looking forward to a lovely, cosy Christmas, but she was very brave and helped me to pack and I was away within an hour of receiving orders, and arrived in Delhi at sunset. I was there told to take the night train to Bangalore and I spent my Christmas day in the train between Delhi and Bombay. On Boxing day I flew from Bombay to [?Sendabad] and next day on from there to Bangalore. The nature of the job I may not mention but it is quite possible that some of the people I have been meeting and assisting at Bangalore were schoolmates of old Hil's during his last year of schooling;¹ though some were probably older and tougher – a strange mixture but some awfully nice simple – though hard bitten – chaps amongst them.

I forgot to mention that Jack Phelps came all the way up from Karachi to spend Christmas with us and arrived on Xmas morning to find I had done the vanishing trick the day before. But I was very glad he came because Doekel and he got on like a house on fire – so D. writes to me – both very fond of music etc. and it gave D. someone to go around with. Jack by the way missed his train when intending to depart from Peshawar. Daphne Bray, with whom D. is staying and who very kindly found room for Jack, said it was because Jack was so enjoying D.'s company he wanted to stay another day – I like to believe that was the reason too.

I fear me that my darling little wife is going to get another shock now for this sudden recall from Bangalore means I am off further afield. A staff job in Burma I think – I will tell more if permitted, after visiting Air HQ tomorrow morning. I, personally, shall be as safe as houses. Air Force staff always ensure that, but the only thing I worry about is the shock of parting from D. indefinitely just at this time. She writes to say, joyously, that she thinks she has felt the first faint stirrings of the new life.

1 As AGTJ's elder brother Hilary spent his last school year in the USA, this is probably a coded way of saying that they were Americans (and nothing to do with Hilary), the USA having entered the war a few weeks earlier following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Anyway, I think I shall be allowed time for a quick visit to Peshawar before I leave. My baggage is all in Rawlpindi, my wife in Peshawar and I, by tomorrow morning will be in Delhi, so life is a little hectic.

One lucky thing is that old Col. [?Ledger] (Dad's [?penpal]) is still in Peshawar (though I have not had time to call on him again yet) and that he is an expert [...]ologist and in the summer goes up with the N.U.F.P. Government to a little hill station called [?Nalja Gulli], where there is a small hotel run by the Governor's housekeeper, which sounds just the place for D. I know that I can leave D. very safely in the hands of Ledger. The only snag is that she will NOT know many people there. It is [?primarily] a "civil" hill station. But I know your hearts will go out to her and that you will write to her often and cheerfully. Send everything to D., she can always send it on to me.

Flashman's Hotel
Rawlpindi
Evening, 13th Jan 1942

In continuation of my pencilled scrawl, I arrived at Delhi before breakfast this morning, called on "Poppette" Sleighthome (to who's daughter I am godfather) and she gave me some toast and coffee, then I was at HQ from 9 o'clock till 12 noon, then to the aerodrome and I landed here when it was still just light enough to see. I am glad to find all my luggage here in the bungalow that would have been ours. I shall start for Peshawar at dawn tomorrow and arrive in time for breakfast with D. Then I leave Delhi Eastward bound in a larger aircraft on Sunday 19th Jan.

"And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light;
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!
But westward look, the land is bright."²

It is a little ironic that I should find myself using the same aircraft to come to Peshawar to say 'au revoir' as I used to fetch D. (illegally) from Jodhpur in, in the sad glad spring of 1939 [sic – clearly an error for 1940].

Anyway believe me I am as fit as a fiddle, and in good spirits and D. writes to say that now the sickness is over she is feeling grand. It is only a matter of time in the Pacific theatre, I have a good (visual) reason for confidence in the final outcome, and with a bit of luck I shall be back in Old India in time for the great event. We, by the way, just received a pencilled letter of congratulations from Huck.³ He is getting around a lot these days and was just off to Teheran at the time of writing. Bless you all and so much love
from Trev.

2 The final stanza of Arthur Hugh Clough's poem *Say not the Struggle Nought Availeth*, the whole of which is quite extraordinary appropriate to the situation both at that point of the war, and for AGTJ personally.

3 AGTJ's cousin Harold Hindle James (1894-1969), who was a retired RAF officer living in Egypt and working for the British Overseas Airways Corporation; he visited Teheran in December 1941.

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TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS
FLASHMAN'S

FLASHMAN'S HOTEL
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