



Laura Jane Musser and
Family Papers.

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Miss Laura Jane Musser,
05-W 115th Street
New York City.
u.s.a.

7
RANGOON
PASS

From

Miss - A. E. Martin

A. B. M. Girls' High

School

Mandalay

Burma



A. B. M. Girls' High
School,
Mandalay.
5th March 1941.

Laura dearest,

Your letter dated
2nd December by the China Clipper
only arrived today. There was
such a sad, world-weary strain
about your 'life', that something
impels me to write to you at
once. I feel I would just like to
put my arms around you and
just love you know, so that you
can forget all the pain in your
life. What would I not give to
be with you tonight dear. I
am sure I could help to make
you feel better, for I feel I

understand you so well and that I love you so much that you would feel better just to tell me about your troubles. I know, dearest, how very very lonesome you must be. It seems sometimes that you are all alone & that there is really no body who really cares. But you will know that way over in Burma, there is somebody who cares and who understands. I only wish I could be closer, so that I could be of some comfort to you.

I feel very unhappy myself. I feel very much alone in Burma. I live with very uneducated people - I mean people who have had very little culture in their lives. Most of them have never left Mandalay, and have had no college education. Sometimes, I am so blue that I could almost wish I could lie down and die. Yet it is my job to uplift these under-privileged children and to help them physically and mentally. I spend a great deal of my salary, helping all these poor people, that I just manage to make

³
both ends me. They are so
poor, that I have to give them
clothes so that they can come
to school. Some of them don't
even have soap. I work and
work to help all these
people. Sometimes, I wish I
had a lot of money. But
since my father's death, I
have to learn to manage on
what I earn.

But keep up your courage
dear. You may see me back in
New York when the war is over.
I shall try to save all I can,
so that I can come back
to help you and to try and

By Air Rangoon. Chungking. Hongkong.
And by surface to the U.S.A.



Miss Laura Jane Musser
No. 605 W. 115th Street
New York City
U.S.A.



From

Miss - A. Martin

A. B. M. Girls' High

School



Mandalay

Burma

Mandalay, 11th March 1941

Laura dearest, I have just seen an official letter stating that letters may be sent by the U.S.A. by air. I am so thrilled about it because our air-mail service stopped with the war. Please let me know how long this letter took to reach you. I would like to know if this route is really faster.

I have just written you telling you about the things I am sending you by a friend who is returning to America. I have asked her to send them through Customs & that you would pay customs at the other end. These are the things: 1 hand-woven shawl from Bali, One hand-carved ivory comb, 2 Chinese silk nighties, One gold Cameo brooch, one gold star-sapphire ring, ~~two~~ ^{one} pair of gentlemen's links - three jade pins, One jade butterfly brooch, one jade bracelet, seven jade rings. They will come through you in bond through Customs. I am pricing them very low, so that you will not have to pay much duty. Please let me know when you receive them.

Also I forgot to mention. When you send me the check for \$200, please send it by draft through any bank on the National City Bank of New York, Rangoon. I have an account there. Ask for the draft in duplicate and send me one by air. It is safe to send things by air, because letters do not get lost that way.

Every time I think of all your unhappiness, how I wish that I could do something to help you. But you have a great deal of my sympathy and I know that friendship helps us so much. When I get terribly depressed here, I sit and think about you and am so happy that I know you, and I can always sit and write

to you. Every time I receive a letter from you, the day seems different from any other day, and life seems worth while living again. You have no idea what a comfort your letters are to me. Friendship is a wonderful thing, isn't it?

Soon you will be returning for the Summer. I wish you will find a little more happiness at home. But if you are blue, write and tell me all about it. It is very true that it is difficult to find happiness in life. I am realizing it more and more. I am so thankful for work, because that helps me to forget a great number of my troubles.

We have only a few more days of school and then we close for 2 months. But please continue to write to me because all my letters are forwarded to me. The temperature is warming up. It is about 75° now. It will continue to be that for the next 3 months.

Will you be returning to New York after Summer? What a pity there is a war, if not you could come over to visit me.

Give my love to your mother when you write her. I hope your sister and baby are well.

I can only send a short letter because this letter goes by air. Let me know when you receive it.

With much love, Affectionately,
Adelaide

A. B. M. Girls' High School
Mandalay.

28th February 1941

Lama dearest,

How can I ever
thank you for that very beautiful
Xmas Gift. I just love it and
shall always think of you as
I go on my travels. You can't
imagine how every one envies
me that gift, for such things
cannot be bought in Burma.

But above all, how I do
appreciate your thought of me.
Every time I look at it, I can't
~~help~~^{forget} the tears that come to

²
my eyes. I keep thinking that I may never see you again, and sometimes I miss you so much. I am so happy I have your picture. I have it up in my room. I think it was a lovely idea that you thought of giving it to me, because when I look at it somehow you don't seem so far away.

I hope this letter will reach you before the parcel I am sending by a Missionary who is leaving for America on March 25th. She is willing to take the things for me, and I am asking her to send it through the Customs in bond, so that you can pay the duty on arrival. The government will not allow us to send any more parcels out of the country, because of the war, but I have been collecting these things for you for the past few months and I have quite an interesting collection. I shall enclose a list. I am pricing them at a minimum

³
so that the customs duty
will not be too high. That is
the only way we can get
things out of the country.
You can give most of the
things away as gifts because
none of the things are
expensive, except the sari.
Sapphire ring set in gold.
The gold is 18 carat gold,
and the stone is a good
one. Keep the jade set in
gold for yourself. Give the
other pieces away. The
wavy comb was especially
carved in Mandalay by

4
hand. The skirt is a hand-
printed skirt from Bali. I
bought it when I was in
Bali. I couldn't send it by
mail as it was so heavy.
Just rip the black top and it
will make a lovely sofa
covering or a wall hanging.
Cut it into pieces for cushions
or runners if you want. It
is a real hand print from
the South Seas. The jade is
from Burma. We have different
coloured jades. These are
samples they are all
colours, and I think they
are quite interesting. I

¹⁵ have set them in silver, & you can give them away. The black jade links can be given to a gentleman. They have not been well set, but the jade can be reset. They have been set by an ignorant old Burman & he has done them with his rude hands. All these rings have been made by hand & of course they are not very fine as if made by a machine.

I want to send you brass ware & lacquer ware etc but the war makes it very difficult. Wait till the war is over, and I can send you all your Christmas gifts from here. Just let me know what things you would like sent again & I'll get the same things ordered. I just love doing things for you.

Did you ever receive the Burmese music book I sent you? Also the Burmese bags? So many things are apt to be lost during the war.

School closes on March 17th for two whole months. That is our Summer & it is

very warm there. But I shall be glad of a rest there. I can hardly believe that I have been at work for 9 mths. It is almost a year since I returned. How I wish I were back in New York!

The war situation is worrying us a bit. If we are at war with Japan, we shall surely be in the midst of all the horror of war. But we are arming rapidly and we have our black ops and C. R. P. practices. The Chinese border is only 175 miles away from us. But we have to be prepared for the worst. How fortunate

7
you are that you live in
America - the land of freedom.
you do not live in a constant
dread of war, as we do.

Will you be returning to
New York next year? Do you
still go to Carnegie Hall & to
the theatre?

I have often thought of that
little musician. I can't
remember her name. She
was wonderful at the piano.
Where you see the Moltan,
please remember me to her.

Please let me know when
you receive the things I
am sending you. On
the next page is the

list. I can let you know the approximate value of things, so that you can judge to whom you would like to give the things. Silver tarnishes when taken across the Ocean, because of the salt air. Please put some plate powder, and rinse them in water with a brush. Then it will be nice and shiny again.

With much love, Adelaide.

List of things in the parcel.

	\$ -
1. Skirt from Bali —	4 - 0 - 0.
1 Ivory Comb —	5 - 0 - 0.
1 Star sapphire ring —	15 - 0 - 0.
1 " " ring in silver - -	3 - 0 - 0.
7 jade rings - - -	14 - 0 - 0.
1 " Butterfly broach - - -	3 - 0 - 0.
1 " Broach in gold - - -	4 - 0 - 0.
1 " Bracelet - - - -	6 - 0 - 0.
1 " in silver - - - -	1 - 0 - 0
	\$ 55 - 0 - 0

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PASSED X

1941

Miss Laura Jane Musser,

"Little Falls"

Minnesota

U.S.A.



From

Miss A. E. Martin

A. B. M. Girls High School

Mandalay, Burma



Amelia

B442 No. Dakota

Mandalay,
25th July 1941.

Dear Laura,

I have been planning to write to you for ages, but I have been busy every minute. I am single-handed this year in running this school because the American woman who has been here for the last 25 years has returned to America and left a young girl in her place. But I am thoroughly happy when I am busy. I have no time to get lonesome, and this keeps my mind from wandering to friends over in America.

This is your summer vacation, and I am wondering how you are spending it. You can't imagine the number of times I think of you and wonder what you are doing. There are so many interesting things one can do in America. I thought so much of you last evening. I went to see the Movie, "They Shall Have Music". Joshua Weiffitz was the Musician, and he played a very prominent part in the story. Carnegie Hall appeared in the film, and I could not help but wipe away a tear in the dark, when I thought of the number of times you took me there. Oh! so much of my memories of New York are connected with you. On Saturday, I am

3 taking the children to see the Wizard of Oz. Today at the breakfast table, I told them about how you had given me the Oz books, and the music, and about your grandfather. This evening I am teaching them some of the songs. So you see Laura, all your kindness and generosity in the past has meant so much to me, and it goes on living in the lives of the children I work with. God bless you!

Thank you so much for the cheque. It was forwarded to me through the National City Bank of New York. Every time I go down town, I want to send you something because I know you will be interested. The other day I saw a beautiful pair of carved teak wood elephants for book-ends, and how I longed to send them to you - but this blessed war! It gets closer and closer to us every minute of the time. Japan has now occupied bases in Indo-China, and that means that all our air service has stopped. We have no more services by air, and so our mail has to go by the long route by sea. It will be several months before you receive this letter. We are finding it harder and harder to buy foreign things. We are not allowed to send any parcels out

of the country. The price of face-powder is three times the ^{original} price! It is very difficult for foreign goods to be transported to Burma. The price of paper is exorbitant, and with great difficulty we are able to obtain text-books for the classes. Yet, in many ways we are fortunate because Burma produces its own food-supply. We can still subsist, even if we can't buy luxury articles.

Do you remember the Javanese girl - Herawati? She has returned to Java, and last mail I had a very interesting letter from her. She is missing New York very much, yet seems happy to be home. The war situation is very tense in the Dutch East Indies. When the war is over, she says she may come and visit me.

I am not going to write you a long letter this time, because I am enclosing one of my circular letters which tell you something about life in a Burmese school. My love to your Mother & Sister, and your

Dear Self.

Affectionately,

Adelhardt

Did you ever receive
the Burmese jewellery?
How did you like it?

A.B.M. Girls' High School,
Mandalay.

July 1941.

Dear Friends in America,

It is now a whole year since I returned to Burma, and maybe some of you have forgotten me. Sometimes I myself, wonder if I was so far away from home, yet how very real my experiences over there are. How well I can remember the beautiful hills of Virginia, or the beautiful ocean at Maine. I agree heartily with J.M. Barrie- the creator of the immortal Peter Pan- when he writes that God gave us Memory ~~whe~~ so that we may have Roses in December.

Another school year has begun, and another year of intense, throbbing life lies before us. I wish you could sit around in our office for awhile when we begin our new term in June. To Americans, it would be a strange experience. To us, Heads of schools, sometimes it is a heart-breaking and dissapointing job, sometimes it is most exhilarating and amusing.

One morning, a woman entered and sat down upon a chair limp and helpless. I asked her what I could do for her, whereupon she said, " Could you admit my two little girls free into your school? " A surprised look swept over my face as I looked at the many diamonds on her person. " Are you poor? " I enquired. " No, not exactly. But you see, it is this way. I have just taken my two boys to an expensive Boarding school, and I have no more money left to keep my two little girls in school. The expense of keeping my boys in school is three times as much as it is over here. Considering these circumstances, could you not remit the fees for the girls. Boys should be given all the advantages, but girls ! Of course, you understand how it is being a woman yourself. " It was all I could do to keep a straight face and appear good-mannered.

Every little while tragedy creeps in behind the meshes of our screened door. Last week a young mother of twenty three entered, clutching her frail little girl of eight. She was accompanied by her husband aged thirty two, and he spoke English very well. He was a Hindu and had deserted the mother on the birth of the child. Evidently he had suddenly awakened to his responsibilities, and now he was very desirous of educating the little girl. We were to spare no expence. The child was to be brought up as a Hindu- was to abstain from the eating of meat and pork. He gave us full instructions that on no account was the mother to see the child, or take the child home. The tears began to roll down the mother's long dark lashes, and she clutched the child harder than ever. We registered the child's name and they departed. The day after, the little mother accompanied by her mother, entered the office and kissed our feet and wept. She begged and she pleaded to see the child. When the child arrived, she hugged and kissed the child with great tenderness and with great hunger in her heart. The following Saturday, she came and told us the story that her brother was very ill and wanted to see the child very much. With some hesitation and doubt on our part we let the child go. The mother had promised to bring Radda back at six o' clock. Six o'clock came but no Radda. We searched the town late into the evening but it was in vain. What would the father say if he only knew that we had let the child go to her mother! The next morning a letter arrived by bearer saying that the mother wished to withdraw the child. Accompanied by the bearer, we went to the home. The Uncle was not very sick. The little mother's heart was filled with fear. Her husband was trying to steal her child away from her. Radda was all she had to live for, for life had come to a dead end for her at the time of the father's desertion. We talked to her of a compromise- allowing her to see the child and to take the child home periodically; but she was adamant. She wanted her child back, even at the cost of poverty and illiteracy. Who can blame her?

Can you imagine any American school teacher running down several blocks at the heels of a girl who refused to return to school because she had failed in her grades? I can still picture Miss Dorothy Wiley almost six feet, weighing 160 lbs: rushing out in a heavy rain down a dirty street after a long-legged girl of 14 years. It was so funny that I stood helpless with laughter. The mother who was very anxious that her daughter return to school and be educated. She had come to me and had asked me to get the child out of the gharry- a four wheeled box-like vehicle drawn by a very scrawny horse- The child was clutching hard to the sides and I talked to her gently at first, but being unsuccessful, I decided to use force. I struggled for a bit; but in vain. I called to our big strong girl Dorothy from Milwaukee to assist, but in a flash of time the child had rushed out of the gharry and was flying down the block with Dorothy Wiley after her. I still roar with laughter every time I think of it.

With the opening of the Burma Road, the war draws closer to us. Burma is armed to the teeth. Soldiers are pouring into the country and just now Mandalay looks like an armed camp. Hitherto the people have lived such detached lives, and Foreign wars did not effect our lives very much. Now we can't help but sit up and take notice. Soldiers and more soldiers everywhere. The cost of living is going up rapidly. In the first place there are all these soldiers to feed. In the second place the opening of the Burma Road has got greedy people making a great deal of money. It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good. There are quite a number of people that are happy that there is a war going on. Many companies have been floated. These companies buy all the trucks available in Rangoon, load them up with all the goods they can buy in Rangoon- the capital of Burma, and drive the trucks to Chungking and sell the truck for almost double the price and the goods at fabulous rates. In this way they are cutting off our supplies. Last month I paid ten annas for a pound of butter and this month I paid twenty annas for exactly the same thing. I used to pay ten annas for a tube of Colgate's tooth paste but when I went to buy some the other day I managed with great difficulty to find a tube and the price was twenty eight annas. In American money that is fifty cents. In spite of these unimportant facts, we have so much to be thankful for. How grateful I am for the protection of the great big British Empire. When I read of the courage and endurance of the wonderful Londoners, I feel ashamed of the small part I am playing to help win this War.

With the opening of the Burma we have many interesting experiences. For one thing we never know whom we are going to entertain at the next meal. We have people drop in, in season and out of season. Two nights ago we had two people asking us to give them a meal about ten o'clock. We had had ours at seven o'clock and all the servants had gone home. But we managed to keep them from starving. Burma is not like America, because it is not safe to even get a drink of water unless we know that it has been boiled, much less eat any thing unless we know where it has been prepared. You have to fear the huge limousines that come whizzing along like big whirl winds, and we have to fear the microscopic germs that so often creep into our food. We are happy to have people drop in. It gives us a glimpse of the outside world. Any time you are bound for China, do drop in, and when you sing, please sing, "On the Road Through Mandalay". Sure we shall be there to welcome you! Only I shall have to manufacture a few flying fishes for you.

My greetings to you.

Your Burmese Friend,

Adelaide Martin

help you to seek satisfaction and happiness. I know there is much you can help to do in this war-torn world of ours. You can't imagine just how much you have to give the world.

If I were with you, I know that I could help you to find a big place in life for yourself. The trouble is, nobody tries to understand your views - points, & they cause you a great deal of unhappiness.

About your help about war supplies. I am very grateful

for your offers of help. If you could only see the need and suffering around me! You remember the big bundle of things you gave me. I have used every scrap I could for these people in want. I only wish you were here to see how I have used everything. But it is hard to send goods, but I could use any money you wish to contribute. I have on hand any number of Orphans on hand, and \$5. a month would keep them in school for a whole month. Yes, there is so much one can do in this sad world. I am trying to fill my little corner of the world by training people to have a bigger vision of service. I can't change the world much but I can make my small contribution.

If you want to send me a check, you can do it through any bank. Just ask them for a draft on the National City Bank of New York, Rangoon. I have

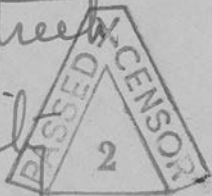
6
a banking account with them,
and you can send me a
draft from any bank in
America, and send it to
my address through the
National City Bank of New
York.

I am enclosing a letter
written by one of the little
girls of my school. She is
just learning English. She is
a nice little girl.

I must hurry to class as
the bell has rung. Much love
to your dear self. Affectionately
Adelaide.



Miss Laura Jane Musser,
605 W. 115th Street
New York City
u.s.a



Miss A. E. Martin

A. B. M. Girls' High
School

Mandalay
Burma

1412

Air-mail via Chungking & Hongkong
by surface mail to the United States.



NOT OPENED
BY
CENSOR

Miss Laura Musser,
"Linden Hill"
Little Falls,
Minnesota,
United States of America

From

Miss A. Martine

A. B. M. Girls' High School

Mandalay

Burma.



Hope you have received the
pieces of jade by now.

A. B. M. Girls' High School,
Mandalay,
7th June 1941.

Dearest Laura,

Thank you so much for your air-mail
letters - two of them - received two weeks ago. They were
very interesting and I have enjoyed them very much.

I am so sorry to hear of the attack of measles you had.
Wasn't it a shame to have had your vacation ruined
in that way. You must take care of yourself better than
that. I don't think you rest enough. Be a real good
girl, and try and take care of yourself. I think you
really need me to take care of you.

I wonder what you will be doing this vacation. I
am going to address this letter to your home, and if you
are away, they can forward it to you.

I have just returned from my summer vacation. We
closed for the month of April and May. It gets very very
hot there, and the temperature is round about 110°.
Even while I write, the first week in June, I am dripping
perspiration. Our monsoons have not broken, and
even thing is parched and dry. You can imagine what
a fire would be like at a time like this. We experienced
one towards the end of March. I shall never forget it.
P. T. O.

²Early one morning, roused about 1:30 P.M. I was awakened out of a sound sleep by a terrific blaze outside of my window. Just outside my window was a huge fire blazing, sending out fierce tongues of fire. Before I was awake, the sparks were flying into my bed, and my mosquito-net began to catch on fire. I jumped out of bed, and awakened every body. We have no fire-brigade such as you have in New York. All we had was a small garden hose. We rushed around for all we were worth, and we fought the fire for two whole hours. At one time, even my hair was on fire. My dress was riddled with burns, and there was a strong smell of burning every where. Well, we did manage to save the school, but I was quite ill for a whole week after that. The strong fumes had penetrated my lungs and throat, so that I felt burnt right down to my stomach, and I had a high temperature for several days. It was just as well that I had a vacation after that, so

³ that I could go up to the hills to recuperate. It was quite an experience, but that is only one fire in many years. Just think of what the English are experiencing. They certainly are brave and courageous, and we must do our little bit to help win this war. You are quite right in what you say about the so called civilized white race. But I am sorry to say that the Asiatic is learning the bad ways of the white man too. Look what Japan is doing at the present moment. We are exceedingly ashamed and afraid of her. The average Burman simply wants to be left alone, to enjoy life the way he wants, and not have a great deal of imperialism or exploitation thrust upon him. But as the world shrinks, he is brought nearer and nearer his neighbours, and he is brought more and more into the field of competition; so he must stir himself from his lazy ways of living and thinking; and this is where my responsibility comes in.

For this reason, I want to thank you very much for your generous gift of \$50. towards my work.

when it arrives, I shall write and tell you, so that you will know that it has reached me. If it does not, then you can inform the bank, and they can issue a second draft. But you are very generous, and you will never realize how much good in the world you are doing. It takes a lot of time and patience helping to build a better world, and sometimes I become very discouraged. It seems as if I am accomplishing very very little; but I suppose that if every person did his bit, the world would be a different place.

It is getting harder and harder to get supplies in Burma. You see, we being on the Burma Road, really pay a price. All the foreign goods that are being sent to our Capital City Rangoon, are being bought up by companies who are doing big business with China along the Burma Road. In Mandalay itself, it is no unusual sight to ^{see} over a hundred of these huge trucks lined up en route for China. They are loaded with goods which are carried to Chungking

⁴ and sold at fabulous prices there. The poor Chinese!
Some companies are really enjoying this war,
because they are becoming very rich over this trade.
Here of course, we Burmans have to pay very
high prices for the very few goods that are left for
us to buy. It is very difficult to buy writing paper,
and books for the girls. Last week, I had a time
hunting around the town for some butter. A friend
of mine was ill, and wanted some grapes, so I
went to a store where they had some limp, brown
ones, and they asked $2\frac{1}{2}$ American dollars for a
pound of these stale grapes. I returned without them.
We are paying 16 American cents for a cake of Palm-
olive soap; so the next time you are using soap,
think of us.

Yet in spite of a few discomforts, we have cause to
be still happy. Every night we can couch on a good
night's sleep, and every night I think of the English
and what they must be experiencing. Thank God
for the blessings we still enjoy.

How is your sister and her baby? I know how much you must love the little girl. I have no young babies in my family. My sister's children have all grown-up and have begun to go to school. The youngest is six years old. I am sending you two snaps of the children & their home.

Under separate cover, I am sending you some newspapers cuttings which tell something of the life of the people. These articles are written by a

Burmese. You will find some of them interesting.

School has just started, so that I am extra busy. Running a school means quite a lot of hard work. But I enjoy hard work.

Thank you for sending me Hilda's address. I shall be writing her where I find the time. Ma Khin Nu was very very pleased you had written her. At present she is sick in bed. She has fever.

Please write often. I feel a new person on the day your letters arrive. It lifts me out of my life of hard work, and takes me back to happy days in New York. You can't imagine how much good they do me.

Much love - Affectionately Adelaide