

NKEM GOES TO AMERICA

By Bertram I. N. Osuagwu

(For my brother-in-law, Professor Chibuzo Ogbuagu, Commissioner for Education, Abia State, and his wife, Professor Stella Ogbuagu (nee Osuagwu), Deputy Vice Chancellor, Abia State University, Uturu, and their children, Chibuzo and Onyema.)

FOREWORD

It is not easy for a person just to get up and say that he is going to do this or that. Especially it is not easy for a person to wake up and say that he is going to go to America. The following story tells how I, Bertram Iwunwa Nkemgemedi Osuagwu, started thinking that I would go to America, and then actually made the trip. I had seen many people who traveled in earlier times and then came back. Many of these were sent out by their parents. Some of them were sent by their families, others were by their towns or government authorities who sent them to go and study various subjects or on other important missions, like people who were sent as agents. In my own case it was not my parents who sent me, nor was it my family or government.

I thought I would try and do it the way some people do it today, which was to just go and look around during my *ezumike*, which is called "leave" in English.

When I decided that this was what I was going to do, I made various preparations to see that the trip would be successful. Since my wife had gone there first, it was not hard for me to tell her that I was going to go. She quickly agreed.

Another thing that made me decide to take the trip was that some people had written books about Igbo customs, including myself, who had written one called *Ndi Igbo Na Omenala Ha*, but no one had written in Igbo about customs or ways of life of other countries. This is why I decided to leave no stone unturned to see that if I set foot in America I would be sure to write about some of their ways of life so that many people living in our land who were unable even to dream of traveling to America could read in their own language what one who had seen America could bear witness to about America.

In addition, some who made the journey went there and lived as though they had forgotten their homes. Some who went came back, whether they went to study or whether they traveled only to tour or look around, and told different kinds of stories about America. If they told a story about America they would exaggerate it, causing those who had not gone to look for a way to go or think that the place resembled heaven. This made me think that in view of this, I would try to go there and use my feet to walk around, use my eyes to look around and use my tongue to get at the meat of it (pluck its breadfruit and its kernel).

Another thing that caused my heart to beat fast and made me insistent on traveling to America, whether I had anything left or not, was the way people told stories about how we dug yams or pulled up cocoyams, and kept on telling them when they were in America. It got to the place where people started to look at those people as though they were leopard-killers. However, they say that when the talk starts to be about money, the poor person keeps quiet.

All these things were included in coming to see the land they said was God's country (more than other lands), and the splendid things and various handiworks that were in their land.

If I went there and traveled around and returned home and told a story like many of the others, it would not germinate in my heart and in the hearts of others who would hear it. Not many people would know about it. This made me prepare to write everything I could about the journey. The way I thought of it was "when it will happen, when it will happen." At last this trip came to fruition. And that is why this book was prepared and exists today. Since my wife had traveled and returned but I had not traveled, I did not know how it would be. That is why I went.

Since Nkem went on this journey he has gone to America three other times and studied there. He went from there to study a while at Queen Victoria University in Toronto, Canada, and had the opportunity there to climb the highest building in the world, called Canadian Towers, and write his name and address there. He also went to Rome and toured the Vatican several times. But here we have an opportunity to read about the outcome of his first journey.

Buy and read NKEM GOES TO AMERICA.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very grateful to my good in-law and my sister, who are Chibuzo Ogbuagu and his wife Stella and their children, twins Chibuzo and Onyema, who made my trip possible. Thanking them in this way without explanation will not tell the whole story about them.

Chibu completed his studies for the doctor's degree, which is Ph.D. in Political Science. It was at Yale University, a highly-respected university in America. He did research there and also taught. My sister, his wife, was a 1974 graduate of the University at Nsukka. She continued studying to receive the title of doctor (Ph.D.) at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

As they both continued at the same level in their respective schools, trying to finish quickly, this was the situation when I went to stay with them. If they had been like many other people, they would not have had the time for me. But not they. They gave their time, their money, their car, and took me around to many places I could not have gone on foot, and places that many people who lived in America or who were born there had not seen. That is why I give them my special gratitude.

I also thank their children who made it possible to rest only when I had gone and sat down to make notes about what I saw each day. If they had given me trouble it would have prevented me from writing all these things there; I would not have had a chance to have some fun and play around as I did when I was with them. They kept calling me "big uncle" and then started to call me "beer uncle" even though I did not drink "beer."

I also thank my wife and children who kept watch while I traveled and returned, they and all my relatives and the friends who came to the airport in Enugu to meet me. It is not everyone who can do things like that.

I also thank the one who typed my story and all those who proofread it for me and those who are sending it out for me now. In this way, the book is being distributed.

Before I finished writing this book these two people received their Ph.D. degrees. I give them great thanks and praise and also thank God in heaven for guiding them in doing it. I also thank everyone reading this book for its pleasure and its instructional value.

Dr. Bertram I. N. Osuagwu

1 About the U.S.A. (U.S. in brief)

Just as Nigeria became something called "Federal Republic," so did America become a "Federal Republic" which is in North America. There are places surrounding it. To the north is the country of Canada, to the east is the Atlantic Ocean, the land to the south of it is Mexico, and to the west is the Pacific Ocean. It consists of 50 states. Listed according to their order of entrance is the large group of states which joined together to become the United States.

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|----------------|------------------|
| 1. Delaware | 2. Pennsylvania |
| 3. New Jersey | 4. Georgia |
| 5. Connecticut | 6. Massachusetts |

7. Maryland
9. New Hampshire
11. New York
13. Rhode Island
15. Kentucky
17. Ohio
19. Indiana
21. Illinois
23. Maine
25. Arkansas
27. Florida
29. Iowa
31. California
33. Oregon
35. West Virginia
37. Nebraska
39. North Dakota
41. Montana
43. Idaho
45. Utah
47. New Mexico
49. Alaska
8. South Carolina
10. Virginia
12. North Carolina
14. Vermont
16. Tennessee
18. Louisiana
20. Mississippi
22. Alabama
24. Missouri
26. Michigan
28. Texas
30. Wisconsin
32. Minnesota
34. Kansas
36. Nevada
38. Colorado
40. South Dakota
42. Washington
44. Wyoming
46. Oklahoma
48. Arizona
50. Hawaii

2 Preparing for the journey

Going on a journey is enjoyable but it takes a lot of things. It takes money and more money. Most of all, it takes thought when a person starts to think about what he will take on the trip, the method of travel, when he will travel, and the preparations he will make for that journey.

Passport: First of all, one who goes on a journey like this must first obtain something called a passport. This passport is distinguished by a small photo showing the face of the person who answers to this name. But soon it happened on account of this thing called passport that they started to call this picture of a face, a passport. One goes to the office of those who issue the passport, which is a booklet giving the right to travel, and receives from them a form where the would-be traveler will write out what is requested in it, like his name, where he was born, his parents, date of birth, where the person wants to go and what he plans to do there. Then the person will write his name in short form the way he signs it on contracts or on other important documents. The person will find someone well known, like someone who works in a high government position or a minister or a lawyer, and that person writes on it that he knows the one wanting to get the passport and that that person is trustworthy. After that, the person will paste on one of his passport photos and include another one as an extra. He will

enclose a document showing when he was born or how old he is. What is normally done is that the person in court through the magistrate or court registrar will swear or take an oath that he is so many years old or that he was born at such and such a time. The person will bring out the booklet and they will affix a stamp on it, then he will pay ten naira and return the booklet to the passport office.

These days getting a passport is easy because these offices are in every state. (For example, the Imo one is in the same compound as the Cabinet office.)

If a worker wants to obtain this passport, he will get an identification paper from his employers. This will enable him to receive the passport quickly. But if he is unknown, the passport office people will first send out his file and order the police, called C.I.D. in English, to find out if the person is someone of bad character. After this, they send the file back to the passport people. As soon as this is done, it is easy for the passport office people to give the person his passport. You do not pay any fee for it outside of the money that the government authorities require.

During the time that the passport office was only in Lagos, you would hear various stories like people giving money and people sleeping in the passport office before they received their passports. Now that they are located in various states, these stories have become things of the past and one who wants a passport knows what to do. One who obtains this passport knows that even for a journey of a million miles he has taken the first step.

The passport has been obtained, but that is only one small drop in a large ocean. If one wants to go and study abroad there are many other things that he must do. He must get a paper showing that he has been accepted in the college or university where he is going. They will send him a form he will use to pay his tuition and which he will use to take an English examination and get a health examination. A person in this position must go to the government office that oversees students wanting to go and study abroad; he goes for an oral interview and also demonstrates that he has the knowledge that will guide him and the money to support himself. When he has jumped this hurdle and is given his document, he knows that his trip is getting closer.

Another important thing is to discuss what is called a visa. If one is traveling on a leave, as I did, what will happen is that the person will go and pay his round-trip plane fare and get a ticket at the same time. The person should obtain a letter from the one whose house abroad he is going to, saying that he approves of the situation. This is very important unless such a person is one of those business people who will be able to pay the hotel bill himself. When the ticket is received, there still remains the matter of the visa. The person must go and get what is called a "tax clearance certificate" which is for three years in our country now. If he is someone who has not reached the age to pay taxes, he will

obtain from his father, mother or guardian something to show that he paid tax for the past three years. On obtaining this paper he will go to the tax office and write them a letter and receive there what they call a "tax clearance" to show that he has paid his tax for the last three years.

After obtaining this tax document he must go to the bank and buy what is called "traveler's checks" or paper money checks for a traveler. Someone going to America will buy the American ones, which are in dollars. Someone going to England will buy the English ones, which are in pounds, the type of money Nigeria used to use. Someone going to various other parts of the world will buy the money of those to whose country he is going. Whatever paper money it is, one who is going only on a journey has only one million naira to buy. When it is changed into American dollars, it comes out something like one million, one hundred seven dollars or more.

One who has received these things still has an important paper to obtain. This is a paper from the person's place of employment, to show that he is someone they know and that he is traveling on vacation. This is to thoroughly convince the Americans that the person is traveling and will not going to use the trip to sit down and stay there forever.

There is still one important thing that one who is preparing for a journey should do before heading to Lagos to get a visa. Those who do this advise that it is good to do it or begin it before the person starts to talk about the visa. This is to go to the state health office and get inoculations for contagious diseases, such as those causing diarrhoea and yellow eyes. These are in English "smallpox, cholera and yellow fever." The person who is inoculated pays a government fee for them. He is given a receipt and he takes his place on line with those who are waiting for the inoculations. The inoculations are given only two days a week in Owerri, on Mondays and Fridays beginning at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. If they inoculate one day they inoculate again on the next day. That means that it takes something like a week and a half or two weeks. When they finish inoculating the person with these three doses of medicine, they give him a health certificate which will allow him to be accepted at the place where he is going.

After these things are completed, the trip to get the visa, which is a paper allowing entrance to other countries, has been started. What is necessary then is to go and buy an airplane ticket if one wants to fly to Lagos. The person can depart from Port Harcourt or Enugu. They both cost the same amount of money, 37 naira for the outward journey and also 37 naira for the return. One does not purchase the plane ticket the same day he wants to travel. He will allow a few days so the airline people can tell him or authorize for him what is called an "o.k." ticket. He will use this ticket at the time he is given his seat on the airplane. It is not something to go and beg for. If the person does not want to go by plane he gets into a bus like Ekene Diji Chukwu, Osondu, Chi Di Ebere or

Uhuru or others. If the person does not want a bus, he can use the mammy wagon, large trailer truck or "Lagos by air." These are vehicles whose drivers go at life-or-death speeds, come what may. Take your choice.

The important thing for this journey now, for the purpose of obtaining a visa at Lagos, is that the person should bring these important documents:

- passport
- airplane ticket
- traveler's checks, which is the money the bank will exchange for the person
- letter from the person's employers
- letter from the one whose house he will visit, concerning receiving him in America
- yellow health card

When the person reaches Lagos, perhaps he will not know how to get to the American Embassy which is at 13 Eleke Crescent in Ikoyi. What he should do is go by taxi. But before he enters the taxi, he and the taxi driver should agree on what he is to pay, which is something like two, three or four naira to go from the part of Lagos he starts from to the place he wants to go. The best thing for a person reaching Lagos today is to set off early to the Embassy, at daybreak. If one leaves it up to the taxi driver and tells him to take him and when he arrives he will pay what it comes out to be without first settling the matter, that person (the driver) knows that he is lost. The taxi driver can take him the long way around and then take him there and tell him what the meter says.

One should go to the Embassy very early. When I went there the first time at the beginning of the year, I arrived there at 5:30 and the number they gave was 105. When they finally called me, it was 11 o'clock. But when I went this time I arrived something like almost 15 minutes before seven o'clock in the morning. The number I received was 18.

Reaching the Embassy, (you see that) the workers there start on time, and show those who came there how Americans live. You sit down in rows until your number is called, then you get up and enter the building starting from where chairs were placed for the people to sit down. On entering the building, as the person steps inside through a door that opens automatically, there is someone who will examine his bag or anything the person is carrying to see if he has something like a gun (because there are guns like pens that people put in their pockets) or a bomb. There will also be someone who stands straight like a tree erect and rigid to watch everyone who enters. And if you are not told, or he does not move a muscle, you will not know that he is a human being. His duty is to see how a person enters and how he goes out. If there is someone who seems to be causing trouble, that person knows immediately what to do.

On entering the place where visas are given, you will be seated in a beautiful chair worth more than one hundred dollars. The workers are at the right of those who came to get visas. These people who came to get visas are of different types -- those going to America to study, those traveling as tourists or on vacation, those going for medical treatment, and for other things. People are as numerous there as raindrops, especially if it is summer time in their land when people are wanting to go to America.

At first the visa people were seeing something like 100 people, but now they are seeing more than that, because they work very quickly. They do not want to waste people's time. In the place where they sit to give people visas, which is to the right of those wanting the visa, there are six windows to which they call people to come for this and that. They speak over a microphone so that everyone can hear. When they come, they call people 5, 10, or 15 at a time and they come to the first or second or third window and take the visa document which they give everyone for them to write out what they want. What they want is that the person should answer questions like: name, address, reason for going, whether the person has been to America before, whether the person has had a visa before, and the name of the one the person wants to stay with.

The one who is called will go and give this paper and his passport and other documents they want. The person gives it to them and goes and sits down until he is called again. When they call the person again it is to see him and ask some questions to find out if he is telling the truth about what he wants to go and do. After they finish the questioning, he goes and sits down again. There is a window where, if the person is called again, he knows that there is trouble concerning his visa. But if he is called again to the first, second or third window, he knows that things went well and he will pay the visa fee, take his own visa and leave. That visa is a small stamp they place on the page where "visa" is written inside the passport, and they write the day it was given to the person and how many months or years it is valid for. The one for tourists is for three months.

My own and the way I received it surprised me. When they called me the second time and I gave them my passport and other papers, they asked me where I worked and what papers they had given me. They asked where my wife and children were. They asked me when I planned to return. All of these things are to find out if the person traveling will also return. After they finished questioning and I had fully replied to them, they asked me to go and sit down again. It was not more than about five minutes later that they called me again to the first window. When I got there, they told me to pay one naira and 50 kobo. I took this and gave it to them and they gave me back my passport with a small receipt they had put inside it and the visa stamp they had stamped in it. I asked them, "Is there anything else?" What their young man said was, "Guy, you can now go to the U.S." That is, "Friend, you can now go to America." My heart jumped with

joy like when Simeon in the Bible saw the Lord. I left there and started to walk like someone who was on top of the world. I thanked God in heaven because he helped me to make everything go quickly. It took me one hour and 45 minutes from the time I reached there at 15 minutes before 7 o'clock until the time they gave me the visa.

When I came out I jumped into another taxi and went to NET. NET means Nigeria External Telecommunications. This refers to the place where you send wires or call people in various parts of the world. When I got there I wrote my name and the place where I wanted to call in America and paid them 20 naira. Not three minutes after I did this, they called me immediately and told me to go to the eighth booth and talk. As I was picking up the telephone, I immediately heard the voices of my sister and her husband whom I was preparing to visit in New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A. We spoke for three minutes. I spoke with one and then with the other. After I said that I would call again, everything fell silent and the phone people cut us off because the three minutes had passed.

I did all these things before nine o'clock in the morning. After I finished this and returned to Ikeja where I was staying, another thing that I did was to look for a way to get home.

3 How I returned to Owere

It was not easy for me to return on that day but I was determined and said whatever the consequences, I had to get home that day.

I took a taxi from Ikeja to Maryland where I waited for a bus going to the East. While waiting there, I saw nothing going to Owere or Onitsha so I started to look for those that were going to Ibadan. While I was waiting, a car that was going to Ondo came by, saw me and stopped. I was reluctant to go with them. But when I looked closer and saw someone inside it who was carrying books and doing some writing, I felt in my heart that this could be a university or Youth Corps student. The young man looked up and told me to enter, that he was a university student and he was on the way there and would stop at Ondo. After all was said and done, we decided that I would pay ten naira. Without wasting time, I threw my bag in and climbed in. The driver overtook the other vehicles.

We then reached Ondo and the student got out. The driver did not tell me to get out. Because of me he headed toward the Benin road, then stayed until he saw a vehicle going to Benin. He tried to stop it but it did not stop, so he followed it, blowing his horn and flashing his lights. After a while, he drove in front of it, then stopped it and I then started to change vehicles and enter that one by paying them three naira. I waved goodbye to that kind man. The taxi then drove us to the Benin bus station and dropped us off there. At this time a light rain began to fall. The pleas of all of us who wanted to get home from there, that

he should drive us to go and get a taxi to the east, were in vain. Finally I took another taxi going to Benin and then went from the bus station across the interior of Benin to the place where one could get a taxi to the east. When we reached there, I looked for a place to go and buy a Fanta drink and a biscuit so I could eat and drink a bit. While I was drinking, two people who were motor-park touts saw me and asked where I was going. I told them that I was going to Onitsha. They said that there was a taxi with people going to Onitsha. I told them all right, let me finish my drink.

After I finished drinking and wanted to cross the highway to where the taxis were, there was one person driving by himself, who asked me, "Friend, are you going to Onitsha?" I happily nodded yes to him. As I was saying that I would enter, three touts now had scampered over and said that I should not enter. I tried to enter but they came to the door of the vehicle and blocked my way. I told them to let me enter but they refused. I swore that come what may, I would not enter their vehicle but that I would take the vehicle of that other man. I told the man to drive along little by little so I could get to him.

As soon as I thought they had not noticed us, the man stopped and waited for me. As I approached, those people moved their vehicle and blocked us off in front, refusing to let me enter. I told them to let me enter, but they blocked the way. Then I told the man to drive little by little and I would come. They say that the third time is a charm. I went farther away than the first time, then stopped and waited. They and the man scolded each other before he drove speedily to me and told me to enter. I entered really fast. After I had entered, those people ran and brought their vehicle to stop in front of us. I wondered if the person who was being treated in this way was actually the owner of the vehicle. After I had entered the taxi two of them had already arrived in front of us. But when anything happens, it is the work of God's mercy. As they were causing an argument, there before us an army vehicle was coming. I waved and shouted to the army man and told him to look, the army man braked his vehicle to find out what was happening; they were scared to death and turned their vehicle around quickly and ran off as fast as they could, one in this direction, another in that direction. We then headed out slowly, conversing, going something like 80 kilometers an hour. For my part, I would have driven a hundred kilometers if necessary. But the man determined that he was going to do it his way. We finally reached Onitsha at 7:30. The man kindly dropped me at the roundabout between Onitsha and Owerre. There I took a taxi to Owerre. It carried eight people, including the driver himself. One wealthy young woman and her small boyservant sat in front. The taxi drove fast up to a place where it stopped and the young woman and her servant got out.

We did not know that the place where we stopped was in front of a bank and parking was not allowed there. Before long, the policemen who were watching the place came to impound our vehicle and said that the driver was

aiding thievery from that bank. We begged and pleaded for them to leave us but they said they would not do it. The woman pleaded as well but they refused. She spoke English but he did not listen. She spoke Yoruba but that was not successful. Later she spoke Igbo but it was not successful. They started to insult each other. They wanted our driver to give them the key to his vehicle but the driver stubbornly refused. He told them that they should go to their station but they refused. The woman told them all right, they would know that she came from that place. She and her servant then vanished.

As time went on, a few people gathered, and the woman had already arrived with one chief of police there. As they were approaching, the chief of police began to question one of the policemen who held us, one who had spoken up most strongly, about where his cap was. He started to answer him, sir, and yes, sir, and where it fell, and while he was answering the questions the police chief said to us, "Come on, get in and go." Again we dashed into the vehicle, we took off like the rocket that killed people like wild animals in war-time when you would not have found anyone left. We thought that no compassionate person would have agreed to abandon our driver there. As we started to enter, he thanked us all and we laughed and joked and told stories about what had happened and the courage the woman had showed, all the way to Owerre. When we arrived, I got another taxi that took me to my house. My family could not believe that it was I. My wife did not believe that I had received the visa. She thought that I had forgotten what I went to do. But in the end, we thanked God in heaven for the way he had eased my journey.

I had gone the previous day and returned in only one day. I went by Ekene Dilij Chukwu. While returning I had used five vehicles, going from one to another. The reason for this was that I wanted so badly to return on that day. Another thing was that my heart was set on getting back home. When I reached the house it was 15 minutes before 9 o'clock at night, on the journey I began something like one o'clock in the afternoon.

4 I go to America

As I was gathering all my travel needs, nothing then would prevent the dog's death. I told my friends and family who should know about my affairs that I was going on a trip like this. I looked forward to the day of my departure. Soon that day came. But before that, some of my friends had given me various errands, both those that I could do and those that I could not do. Some asked me to buy clothing without giving me the money. Some asked for books in the same way. Some wrote letters to be given to their relatives who lived there telling them to send through me or others some things they were wanting.

As for those whose people I was going to visit in America, they gave me messages, and some things I should take to them like various vegetables, kola nuts

and kola pepper and stockfish. I tried to buy these things early and dry them so they could be firmly tied up and their odor would not come through. I also collected the few garments I would use for traveling in one large suitcase and one carry-on bag. Anyone going to America expects to buy a number of items to take home. These things are garments for himself and a few for friends and family. Some buy shoes and various gifts. The airlines kindly allow a person to carry two suitcases or bags in addition to those the person will carry in his hands. That means that it is not practical for a person to leave our land and pack his bags full with his clothing and shoes for a three- or four-week journey such as the one I took.

Early in the morning of the 26th of August, I got ready early and went and woke up the driver who would was going to drive me. We left Owerri around 6 o'clock and reached the Enugu airport at 8:30. When we arrived, people were crowding around everywhere. I went and sat down in the line to have my suitcase weighed and to confirm the number I had obtained, which was 56. While they took my luggage, my wife and I and my friends accompanied the driver and me to the place where people sat waiting for the plane to arrive. We went and bought a few refreshments and then waited until the time came.

In less than ten minutes we heard the noise of an airplane. In a short time the plane that I was going to take landed. The plane was a Boeing 737.

As soon as it stopped, we knew that it was the one going to Lagos, and you should have seen the people, men, women and children, old and young, everyone scrambling for a good place in line. After those who had come from Lagos had finished deplaning, we started to enter. As I went I was looking back to see if I could see my wife and those who had accompanied me. As I went along I waved my hand so they could see me. Whether or not they saw me, I entered. All of us got on because that plane carried more than 100 people and we were fewer than that. I quickly went and looked for a seat and sat down.

After we entered the door was closed and they advised us that there would be no smoking until the plane was in the air. They also said that everyone should fasten his seatbelt securely around his waist. I liked this plane. It was not like the F27s and the F28s that I used to take to go to Lagos or Jos and Kano. Those carried only a few people compared to this Boeing 737. Flying in them sometimes was like being in a rickety truck. They made the body shake and took the breath away. This one carried 100 people.

As we rose upward, I looked out the window to see how the earth looked and to see if I could see my wife and the others. But as I looked, people looked smaller and smaller as the plane ascended and the engine noise lowered. After that, we began to fly inside the clouds. The land was not so close to us as was the sky. But I still waved my hand whether anyone saw it or not, as though I were

greeting everyone on the ground, since I was now in the air. It is true that as we fly upward, people look very small, houses like pieces of oranges, highways like thread going through needles. I kept on seeing these things, but the way the plane was built no one on the ground was able to see anything in the plane.

In the twinkling of an eye, we had flown away. We left around 9 o'clock in the morning. They told us that the time we left Enugu until we arrived at Lagos would be around 40 or 50 minutes. This was about the time those who drove me in Enugu would take to leave Enugu, go across Agwụ and not yet arrive at Okigwe. They told us what our altitude was at that time and how we would eject.

When it was about 9:15, the flight attendants brought us food called "burger snacks" and wine. Everything was wrapped in packets. They also asked if anyone wanted whiskey. As we ate and drank they announced that we would soon reach Murtala Muhammed Airport. They also said that everyone who was smoking should stop, and everyone should fasten his seat belt well. Shortly before 10 minutes of 10, we landed in Lagos. This plane was beautiful because except for the noise at takeoff and landing, there was no noise inside it.

As it was in Enugu because of many people waiting to go to Lagos, so was it in Lagos with people waiting to go to Enugu. They were there waiting while we got off the plane. After we got off, we went to the baggage area and waited. In Enugu I had received from them a luggage tag and had written my information and put it on the ticket, they had attached their own to the luggage and also put it on the ticket and gave it to me. Soon they carried them out on a carousel.

As soon as I spotted my suitcase I carried it away and went to where the guards were. They checked to see if it was mine and then told me to pass. As I was passing through, the taxi people who were everywhere were already asking, "Sir, which side are you going?" I told them that I was not going anyplace. I went out and rested a bit and chose a taxi that took me where I was going to stay until I could leave on my journey to America.

As I reached the place where I was going to stay in Ikeja temporarily, I saw that I still had a lot of free time. I hurried off to N.E.T. to tell my brother-in-law and sister that one step of the journey there had been taken. I went back and went to eat lunch and to wait for night to come. Planes from Nigeria to America that day departed at five minutes before 12 midnight.

When night came I told my brother, whose house I was staying at in Ikeja and who was working at NAA, that the time was approaching. As I was telling him that the time was approaching, he was telling me that there was still time and he would take me promptly. I went to sleep but waked up before 8 o'clock in the evening. I drank the tea they gave me, bathed and dressed and carried my suitcase and told them that the time had come.

He finally drove me, along with his friend, to escort me. When we reached the Murtala Muhammed Airport, we went from the downstairs area and drove around to the upper level, then stopped our car where the workers there parked their cars.

I took out my suitcase and stepped out quickly toward the place where the travelers for this flight were starting to present themselves. They looked at my travel ticket and saw that my name was listed for the plane and the flight W. T. 850. They took my suitcase from me, checked its weight, attached a ticket to it to identify it and attached one to my own travel ticket. They gave me a paper to write the amount of money I was carrying on the journey and what my destination was. After I finished writing this, we went to a place where they examined my passport and wrote something on it allowing me to proceed. But as I was leaving there, there was a woman whom they detained. Apparently she was carrying a lot more money than she was allowed to carry. Before they started talking she began to quietly beg them and started to give them money. But I heard them telling her "Madam," that this was not a matter of money and they were going to call the police. As they were saying this, I passed by and out of the corner of my eye saw what they and the big madam were doing and I listened. I was not afraid at all because someone who is not carrying anything does not have to fear anything. What I was carrying was the money they changed for me in Owerri. I did not have any American money. They gave me European money which they told me I could exchange in New York. All the money I was carrying came to:

- (i) In pounds, 107 and 18 pounds. This was what my 1,000 naira came out to in exchanging it for European money.
- (ii) In naira, 30
- (iii) In dollars, 20 and a few cents, nickel, and silver as Americans call it.

When I finished, I went and sat down where the transatlantic passengers were sitting. Here my brother and his friend were sitting; they told me goodbye and went home.

While I stayed there I walked all around, looked around and into all the shops that were there. I bought a toothbrush-holder and put it in my bag. Not long after I entered, a certain registrar from the place where I used to work, who was going to America for further study, came along. We embraced each other and started to chat while passing the time.

5 The time for the journey has come

We continued to wait for the time to come and were talking about various things, both facts and hearsay. When it was about 30 minutes before 12 midnight, they announced that those going to the U.S. should take W.T. 850, which would

leave at midnight (23:55), and should go to the boarding area. After they said this, we got up and went to stand in line.

They took each person's carry-on bag and placed them on a special machine (conveyor belt), then brought them out at the other end where each person retrieved his own. When I asked why they did this, they said it was to find out if there was a bag with something like a gun or bomb inside it. They did this because there were too many evil people. There are people who hide guns or bombs in their bags before entering the plane. When they get under way, they head back to the cockpit of the pilot, the one who drives the airplane, put a gun in his face and tell him to take the plane and go to a place where the person wants to go. If the pilot does not obey, he kills him. Some of those who behave this way say if they are not given money in a certain amount or do something else for him, such and such a thing will happen .

Also, at times there are suicidal people or those wanting to become famous who can use bombs to make the airplane explode and cause everyone to die. It is because of this that they made something (X-ray machine) that will be able to look inside the place where things like this are in people's bags or suitcases.

As our bags were going across, a machine like this blocked our path, we were told to raise our arms and everyone was frisked to see if there was something like a gun or bomb that people might have concealed on their bodies. After one had been examined he pulled off his bag and started toward the plane. We continued that way one by one until we had all gone to the plane. From the place where people's bags were examined, up to the place where the plane was, was more than two or three hundred steps, but it was built so that people were completely protected from rain or sun. Indeed, the one billion, three hundred naira that it cost the army to build the it were not wasted. Again, someone looking at it only from the outside will not fully realize how it is. There is plenty of electricity everywhere in this walkway. In this way we kept on walking on it until we stepped onto the plane.

The plane was a DC 10. It carried about 350 people. If you included all the people it was carrying with the airline personnel, it would come to 300 people.

When I entered I saw that its interior was divided in two. "First class" consisted of the first ones who were in the section near the cockpit. The others stayed in the place for others. The workers looked at my ticket and saw that my number was 14A. They showed me to row 14 and which was the A seat.

6. Some of the world's airplanes

UDI	Pasinja o na-ebu	Maji mmiri ede ha na-eferu n'elu	'Ole A turu n'ime ha	'Ole no ano ugbu a.
BOEING				
Boeing 707	160	4,800	941	936
727	143	1,900	1,781	1,594
737	100	1,900	789	643
747	452	5,700	528	430
757	178	2,200	42	Ga-ebido 1983
767	211	2,900	148	Ga-ebido 1982
MCDONNELL DOUGLAS				
DC 10	270	3,500	362	326
DC 9	115	1,500	1,041	936
LOCKHEED				
L-10	290	5,200	234	174
AEROSPATIALE/BRITISH AEROSPACE				
CONCORDE	100	3,350	16	9
AIRBUS INDUSTRIES				
A 300	260	3,100	275	92
A 310	210	3,100	129	Ga-ebido 1983
BRITISH AEROSPACE				
BAC-11	100	1,650	230	225
VEW - FOKKER				
F28	85	1,000	160	150

 NB: Sometimes there are passenger numbers and number of miles they have been in the air that differ from others in their group. (Time, April 7, 1980)

The inside of this plane was like the inside of a church where seats were well placed in rows and lines. Rows of three seats were at the left, rows of two were at the right, and rows of five were in the middle. There was space between these middle seats and those on the left and right. As I looked ahead I seemed to be going into the seats of the important people who were in "first class," but the lowly person stows his bag wherever he can reach. Lights were burning in this plane, making it look as though we were in the middle of the afternoon. They were playing recorded music that filled the air gently like an English serenade. The serenade is a song that a friend, man or woman, sings to another person at the window in the middle of the night. Perhaps you can remember the serenade the radio people used to play before they finished each day, like "Elizabethan Serenade" that was sung softly like this, tata taam-ta, tata taata tata taata.

Because there was a number on each seat and a number given to each person, everyone could find his seat without troubling others. It was quiet everywhere as people entered. If someone might die, I did not worry about it because I said that if as many people as this were going to die at the same time, I would not be afraid.

As I said, lights above and below shone so brightly that if kola pepper (extremely tiny pods) were to fall, one would be able to pick it up. The floor of the plane was soft underfoot because carpet that was cool and beautiful to look at had been laid on it. It was like a fine government office itself decorated by hand and arranged very well.

Inside this plane there was something like a shelf on the right, on the left and in the middle where people could stow items they carried on that would disturb them if carried in their hands or placed under their feet. The items were put in and the thing was closed. On each seat was a place where they had put a life vest so that in case of emergency the person would put it on and jump out of the emergency exit that was included in the plane. That person would then fall slowly whether he fell in the water or he fell (on land). Small cloth blankets for covering the body if it started to get cold were there as well. Lights were used to show where the door to the toilet was. In front of every seat, and behind the seat ahead, there was something like a table placed there so that if the person wanted to eat something or write something, he pulled it out. When he finished eating or writing, he pushed it back in. There was also a light used for reading or to see what time it was and its on-off switch was on the arm of the seat. In addition, there was a small space overhead which let in air.

Before we started, they came and showed us how to use the life vests to save ourselves in case of disaster. But my brother, they say the market has already gotten busy because if it were really busy no one would know where his basket was except for some really strong, courageous people. How many of them are there?

When it reached 12 o'clock midnight, our plane began to warm up its engines. Now they announced that everyone should fasten his seat belt around his waist as we were now taking off for New York. They also told us that we would be flying at something like 37,000 feet and we would fly about ten hours non-stop to reach New York. They said that everyone should enjoy the trip. At two minutes after 12 in the morning, we took off. We were like a bird, between sky and earth. Nigeria was no longer near. New York was far away.

When it was past 1:30 in the morning, the flight attendants gave us morning greetings and brought us food in packets, with rice, meat and drink to take with it, including carrot. A fork, large and small spoons folded in a napkin were in it. Pepper, salt, sugar, milk, coffee, cheese, a small toothpick and a tiny wet napkin for cleaning the hands and mouth were also in it. Everything was folded and sealed into its own container. When it was unwrapped you could see what was inside. After that they gave us tea or coffee. A person got whichever one he wanted. It was from a space near the seats between those on the right and left that a young man and an attractive young woman served the food that was given to the people. After this, they gave drinks and wine to those who wanted it. While this was going on, there was another young woman who carried what is called "ear-phone," that is, a rubber wire that one placed in the ear to listen to the sound. She gave it to those who wanted it at 2 naira in order to watch the movie that was displayed before us. Since I did not have any small change and I did not know much about the place where I was going, I did not waste my money to buy the ear-phone.

Since we had taken off, I had not exchanged a word with the person who, with his daughter, was in the same row of seats at my left. But as the man saw that I was busy scribbling in my diary where I was writing everything that was happening and that I was seeing, he asked me who I was. Then we introduced ourselves. He himself was a secretary for the Onicha Local Counsel, going on vacation. I also explained who I was. The reason we had been silent up until now was my thinking that people did not know each other in the place where I was going. But it is said that if you greet someone, the ice is broken. After we introduced ourselves, the stories began to go back and forth. But while we were talking my hand did not rest when I saw or heard things that I was going to write about. In that plane, beside the registrar who came from the same school as I did, there were other people who knew me. They would wait a while, then come to talk to me, we laughed a bit and then they would return to their seats.

Our journey from Lagos to New York was 6,000 miles non-stop. It was tiring but because of the situation we were in, there was something to watch in there, that and the fresh food there. When there was something like two hours left, they gave us another meal.

As I said before, there was also a flush toilet there and people went in and out of it. I did not want to miss anything. I also went there and saw that it was true that it was a small place but it was fine, soap for washing the hands, paper for drying them, and a mirror was also in it. When you finished defecating you would flush and the water would carry it away. When I finished everything necessary there and washed my hands and face, I went out like the others.

At 27 minutes before 5 o'clock, they told us we had reached the big airport that New Yorkers call "John F. Kennedy International Airport." Just as Nigeria had an important General Murtala Muhammed and named a large airport in Nigeria for this man, the Americans decided to take the name of their 35th President, whom they loved and was assassinated, and use it for their large airport.

As we descended toward this airport, oh brother look at this! What was it? Various lights, some white, some red, some yellow, some green, both those kinds I had seen before and those my eyes had never seen. They were blinking brightly. Every place was shining like a place where all the stars in heaven had been gathered together. If I had not been a grown man, I would have shouted aloud.

This reminded me of a child whom my friend and his wife brought from an interior village to babysit for them. The child had never left their house before to go to any other place. One day they went to Aba. As they approached Aba and the child saw all the houses in Aba, what came out of her mouth was, "Auntie, just look at the houses!" I would have shouted out loud but I restrained myself and looked out and shouted in my heart and pretended that it was something I had seen many times.

Now they told us to fasten our seat belts and stop smoking because we would soon be landing. They said that the temperature at that time was 24 degrees Celsius or 76 degrees Fahrenheit. At exactly 5:30 our plane touched the ground. Every single person applauded the pilot. They told us that we had arrived, but that anyone who had not filled out the paper which is given for entry into America, except for Americans themselves and those who were known in that place, should wait until he or she had obtained that paper and had written what was required on it. The name of the pilot who took off non-stop and piloted for 10 and a half hours was Captain Osakwe. The name of the man who sat at my left with his daughter was Maazi Ifeka.

While we were waiting, I asked Mr. Ifeka how he was feeling, and he said in English, "a big hop across the continents, so far and yet so near."

We stayed until they had finished giving us the papers and we had put our names on them, then we prepared to leave the plane. I went and called to the registrar and he joined us and the wife of our friend who also came from Owere and was going to study further in America.

We all pulled down our bags and stood up while everyone went out one by one. As we were going out, my heart felt like someone carrying a bag of salt. What I said about the entrance-way to the plane in Ikeja, was the same for the one in New York. The difference was that this one had a carpet laid on it that was very soft, which made the feet sink down in it.

We progressed along the sloping walkway until we reached the place where they examined us to find out why we came to America. These were the immigration people. When we reached this place, we all got in line, carrying our bags. Lights shone brightly there. I did not see a grain of sand or anything dirty anywhere. Now the time was 6:30. The time in Nigeria now was around 11:30 at night because in American time here in New York it was around five hours behind Nigerian time. In the place where we were lined up, as I stood there I recognized my teacher who was also an outstanding music teacher, Prof. Laz Ekwueme, who taught in the University of Lagos. As he and I were chatting there, he told me that he was going to Rhode Island.

On the line we were on, if someone's turn came and he was with another person, or they were people traveling together, they were questioned at the same time. When my turn came, I dragged my bag and went ahead. There they asked if I had come here before, where I would be staying and the address of that place. They also asked me how many weeks I wanted to stay. I told them one month. They wrote that on their paper and also in my passport. They told me that I could stay until September 30. However, I knew that I would not stay longer than September 20, which was when my leave would be over. That was also the day I had planned to leave. After the white woman wrote the paper for me she told me to proceed. I went across and did the next thing, which was to look for my luggage. What they call the carousel had brought them out in the meantime. I walked around and saw where my large suitcase had come out and was waiting. What I checked on was the name I had placed on it, and the ticket they had attached to it and also attached to my airline ticket. That bag was so heavy that it could not be carried in the hand or on the head. There were various carts standing there. I went and pulled out one, lifted my luggage, put it in and dragged it and went toward the place where they were checking luggage before people went out.

When they told me to come and open a bag, I went quickly and gave it to them because there was nothing illegal in it in the first place. The only little worry I had was about a few small kola nuts inside the large bag. But they did not tell me to open the large bag. What they told me to open was the carry-on bag. I opened the carry-on bag very quickly, they examined it and told me to close it and go ahead. Who was I now? My feet had touched American soil.

I took my luggage, went out, lifted it out of the cart, set it on the ground and slid it along like when you drag a reluctant dog, up to a nearby bench, and sat

down. Soon my other friend came out, along with other acquaintances, both those I had known before traveling and those whom I had met on the journey.

My friend and I embraced and shook hands like people who had climbed Mt. Everest. In the place where we were then, the taxi-drivers kept coming and asking me where I was going. I told them that I did not want a taxi. As I was answering them, I was looking around expecting that my sister and her husband would come to meet me. It is important to remember that when I was in Lagos and went to N.E.T. and telephoned them, our conversation was cut off. I had told them the name of the flight I was going to come on and the time it would arrive in New York. Soon I saw the particular vehicle that they had described to me at the corner. While I was looking, my sister and her husband got out. They were standing, looking right and left when our eyes met. They came out again and came and embraced me. The way they embraced me, if I had not eaten anything on the plane they would have knocked me down. We were extremely happy. People around there were looking at us. I wasted no time in introducing those I had met on the plane to those who had come to meet me. Without wasting time, my brother-in-law started to take pictures of me randomly. If I faced him, he took one, if I turned in another direction, he took one. Now that I had seen them, I calmed down.

While they were greeting the others, I took the opportunity to look around. In this place, where people who had returned were sitting and waiting for those who were going to pick them up, and the place where those wanting to travel out were waiting for the time when they could present themselves, the floor shone like something rubbed with oil. There were many lights above and around them. The telephone booths were full, and some telephones were in various places. I asked them where the toilet was. Rather than call it "toilet," which was what I called it, they called it by the name they use in America. They called it "rest room." I would have told the person that it was not a place for resting that I wanted, but when I noticed the picture of a man drawn on one door, and in the same way the picture of a woman on another, I realized that the place they showed me was what I was looking for. When I entered, the first thing that surprised me was that I did not perceive any odor even though many people were going in and out. When I finished, I turned on the faucet that was there for washing hands. One faucet was for hot water and another was for cold water. Above the faucet there was paper in a machine. I pulled on it and obtained all the paper I needed for drying the hands, then dried my hands and put it in the place where others like it had been thrown.

When I came out, we carried my large bag to the car and also took more pictures. I said goodbye to all my friends there. We then started the drive out to New Haven where my brother-in-law and sister lived. As we left the airport and were going along, I peered out and saw many other airplanes parked there. When I looked up, I also saw some airplanes landing and some taking off. As I looked

out, I would see a building that seemed to be the most beautiful, but when I had looked all around again I would see another. The one I was looking at seemed to be the most beautiful and the tallest.

We left there and drove into the large area of New York called Manhattan. We drove to the stores of shop-keepers who sold Igbo food. We went in and bought two bottles of cooking oil for three and a half dollars. This bottle was not as tall as ours but its mouth was wide and its contents surpassed what was in ours. We also bought plantain and crayfish. They showed me various types of food of the kinds we eat in Igboland. Man, the yam I saw there was very thin and dry. We didn't buy it. I also saw the wrappers they tied there. And the way they attached it to a board and displayed it temptingly did not please me. We also bought several other things, then started out again. From New York to New Haven, where I was going to stay, was around 76 miles. We drove on a roadway of a type I had never seen before, and various bridges, then went to the Bronx and stopped at several places to pay toll before we reached New Haven and entered Yale University, which is one of the large universities that have a worldwide reputation. When we got there we passed the students' living quarters on Prospect Street and then reached their own apartment. We all were very happy. When we were all inside, we knelt down and prayed and thanked God in heaven for leading me on my journey.

One thing that surprised me was that while traveling, I wore a complete suit. When I arrived, because of the heat I saw people who were almost naked, both men and women, children and adults. No one dressed because of the influence of another, no matter what that person wore. (Anything goes.) While we rested, they brought me food and something like gari which they had made. When I asked them, they said that it was called farina which is made with potatoes. They said that the people here in America made it and enjoyed it the way we enjoy *akamu* (pap) but they make it thick and use it to make their gari. I filled my stomach very much but when I wanted something to drink, they asked what I wanted, orange juice or apple juice. These were the drinks they used for water, including coke and others. But enough of this, or we will kill ourselves with stories. My hosts were telephoning madly to tell their friends that I had arrived and to tell those who had messages to come on over.

I unpacked everything in my bag and gave them their messages. We lingered on until they left me to go to sleep in the bed in the room that they had prepared for me. Now darkness had fallen. I then went to sleep.

7 Where I went

On this journey that I made to America, a land my mother and father had not reached before they passed away, I did not come there so that each morning I

would eat and fold my hands in my lap and just watch television. I certainly did not come to see only the place where I stayed. I came to visit places whose names I had heard, and places where I would see things to tell about so I could write them in a book so I would not forget them. It was also so that other people who would come here would be informed, and those who would not be able to come would read and have it in their minds.

The next morning, my people and I discussed various places I wanted to go. We then made a schedule for August 28, 1980. On the first day, they took me around New Haven to look around and see all the various shops. We brought pictures that I had taken in Nigeria and took them to the people whose work was to receive people's film and pictures that they wanted developed and then send them to a place where they would be developed. They gave me a receipt for reclaiming it on the day they said was shown on the receipt. We walked around during the day until we were exhausted. This is how we spent every day until the day I left to return home. During the trip I set foot in 5 of the 50 states in the U.S. That is in the "United States of America." Those states I set foot in were:

1. Connecticut

This large state is called the "Construction State." It is the place where the laws were made that govern them. It is in this state that there is a well-known university, Yale, which is in New Haven.

2. New York

This state is well known as the "Skyscraper" state, referring to their tall buildings whose heights reach the clouds more than those of other states. It is also known for all the famous markets. Its buildings are huge. There are about 7.5 million people living in it. In its streets, people and vehicles are running around like when the athletes who play ball in Enugu, the Enugu Rangers, finish playing and they and the other team come out of the stadium. This state is so beautiful that if you travel to the U.S. and do not get to it, you know that you have missed something. I went there from New Haven eight times before going home. The first time I crossed it and went to Connecticut when I first arrived in the U.S. The second time I crossed it en route to Washington. The third time I crossed it going to New Jersey. The fifth time, we took my brother's wife who had come first but went home before I did. The sixth time we went to see a ball game they were playing, which they call "baseball." We saw this at their Yankee Stadium. The seventh time I went to look around at the "World Trade Center" and the "United Nations Organization." The eighth time I went to buy things in the place where you bargain as you browse around. The ninth time I left it for home. People call this state "First State," and "Diamond State."

3. Delaware

This is the first among the thirteen colonies of Europeans who left England and went to America. From here, because of greed they began to kill people, to

act unjustly toward people, defraud and do various wicked things and all kinds of trickery and then escaped to other states.

4. Pennsylvania

They call this the "State of Brotherly Love." This was the state where the Americans set up their government and then seceded from the English. This state became the capital of America.

5. New Jersey

Another name they call this state is "Garden State," just as we call Port Harcourt "Garden City," because of its beauty and the way the city is laid out. New Jersey is beautiful. It is filled with many native Nigerians, as is New York.

Some of the places I went to in these states and the things I saw were these:

In New York I went to see:

- (a) "Yankee Stadium," the place where I watched their "baseball." I went to see the meetingplace of the whole world, called
- (b) United Nations Organization and especially U.N.O.
- (ch) World Trade Center (Twin Towers). And the Empire State Building. And Washington, D.C. where I went and saw these places:
- (d) Capitol
- (e) Arlington Memorial Cemetery, where I also went to see the grave of John Fitzgerald Kennedy and his brother, John Kennedy.
- (f) White House
- (gb) Washington Memorial Monument and Jefferson Memorial

In Philadelphia I went to see these:

- (gh) Pennsylvania University
- (gw) Hilton Hotel
- (h) Philadelphia Zoological Gardens

In Connecticut I went and saw:

- (i) Yale University
- (j) Southern Connecticut University (where my wife studied for a while)
- (k) Peabody museum
- (l) New Haven airport

Apart from these places I visited and the things I saw in them, other things that should be touched on are these:

highways
telephones
banks
light and water
legal system
food in the streets and hotels
shops
automobiles (washing them, repairing them, buying parts)
basements
post offices, telegrams. Their life.

8 Description of what I saw at "Yankee Stadium and baseball"

I went there on the night of September 5, 1980. My brother-in-law and his wife and I and their friend, Richard, a Jew who lived in New York with them while studying at Yale, all went together. That young man, because of the friendship between my brother-in-law and him, was called Ricardo. Before we left, we decided how we would proceed. He brought his automobile and we bought the "petrol," and he paid for the parking.

The Yankee Stadium was in the Bronx, which is a well-known section of the large city of New York is. It is 76 miles from New Haven where we lived. Now what did we drive on their highways like this to go and do, especially at night, starting out at around 6 o'clock in the evening? We went to see what is called "baseball." This is the type of ball that they play there for which they are famous, like the ball game we know here (soccer) for which we are famous.

The players of that "baseball" were called the "California Angels" and the "New York Yankees." It was like the way we have the "Enugu Rangers" and the "Spartans" of Owerri. The players, who came from California and New York, answered to those names by which they were known. To tell the truth, I had not seen the place where that game is played or the sport for which the Americans are famous. That is why, when the subject came up and I was asked, the way you ask a child who is craving yam if he is hungry, I nodded my head in the affirmative.

We arrived there about five minutes before eight in the evening. The first surprising thing one sees on arrival is the number of automobiles belonging to the whites and the blacks. People were as numerous as grains of sand. Not knowing what to say, I was stunned by the various lights that shone brightly everywhere.

We first drove our vehicle to the parking area that was near a certain building, which was something like eleven feet. Over the entrance to that building was written "Department of Correction." I asked them what that meant and they told me that it was their prison. As I was looking up, I saw people, each at their own windows, who were the inmates of the prison. We passed them and

went up to the gate where people were stationed to take the money we paid for the ball game. As we were entering, oh brother, come and see. The lights shining there were more numerous than all the lights I had seen at first, which made it so bright that if a grain of kola pepper fell to the ground there you would be able to pick it up.

As I made a mental calculation, I thought that the number of people in that stadium at that time reached 25,000. Our seats had numbers. When we arrived, there were people who had already occupied our seats, but the ushers came and looked at our tickets, then went and looked at the others, and told them to go to another place and we then took our seats. The seats I saw there and where we too sat were like the type of seat that used to be in "Alexandria Auditorium" at Nsukka before the war. All of the seats were in rows and steps from lowest to highest. If you looked to the right, you would see the board where the computer wrote out what was happening in the ball game. It showed the time, the temperature, and the scores. It also played music and made people laugh, clap and sing.

The ball game started about eight minutes after eight. Before beginning, the American "National Anthem" was played. While it was being played, everyone, both the ball-players and the spectators, stood up very still. Looking at the ball-players, all was quiet. When the anthem was finished, there was shouting everywhere. Then the ball game began. Our friend explained to us how it was played and which ones were winning. As the game went on, the noise continued.

Tuturi tui - it sounded (Lee):

Among the players was a man who was said to be one of the millionaires among the hitters. His name was Reggie Jackson. When he came up to bat, the roar that broke out spread out all over, like when Okala or Christian Chukwu of the Rangers set foot on the field. The roar that sounded each time he came out was what my brother's wife said she brought, a thing that is called "titimus."

As the ball game goes on, a kind of thing one sees in "Liberty stadium" in Enugu and in Owerri goes on. That is, there are people selling various items. They carry them around shouting out the names of what they are selling like "ice cream, hot dog, peanuts, beer, soft drinks, cigarettes," and other things. There are also sellers of various kinds of magazines, some selling pictures of the baseball players, and some selling various kinds of souvenirs. Of those who were selling, some were men and some were women. One who is called brings his items and sells them to the one who wants them. There was one thing that we bought. It sounded like Mgbaduga. I chewed on it like the others but it did not taste good, it was tasteless. I carefully held it in my hand. I did not want to be embarrassed by swallowing something I could not handle. (shamefully swallow a razor blade)

I held on to it until the "hot dog" vendor came and I bought from him but gave him the other one to throw away. This "hot dog" tasted good because it was bread with a "sausage roll" inside. I ate this and drank coke and then began to watch with great pleasure, like Christmas-time, that ball game "baseball" that was played differently from the "soccer" that we call football which we play a lot in our country and for which we are famous. Our soccer is to us the way "baseball" is to the Americans. You hold a bat in the hand to hit the ball. One person stays in a certain place and throws it. In the place where he throws it there is someone holding a bat, waiting to strike the ball and hit it a long distance away. If it goes past the waiting batter, there is someone there to catch the ball. That person has a helmet he uses to cover his face and eyes. There are also various things that he wears to protect his chest so that the ball does not strike it. There is something they all wear on their hands that looks like a glove which they use to catch the ball, which is like when electricity shocks something without causing any harm.

This ball game began in the year 1845 in New York where there were the first clubs that played it. The players were nine on each side, who were "catcher, pitcher, first, second, third basemen, right, center and left fielders, and shortstop." After the first side batted, they gave the others their turn and they also batted until the ninth "inning."

If the ball is thrown and the batter hits it, he hits it as hard as he can to make it go out, so that he can leave the home plate where he is and run to the next base or run back. This is what they call a "run." If someone hits and scores a "home run" for his team, they shake his hand in congratulation.

One of those small balls of theirs costs something like three and a half dollars, which is something like two of our naira. If it is thrown and struck but does not fall inside the field where it is supposed to go, the players will catch it, but if it falls where the people are, it becomes a gift to the person who catches it. So if this happens, people jump up to in catch it and keep it as a souvenir. What happens then is something like when they play ball in Enugu and they gather up pigeons and throw them up and people are making a commotion everywhere .

As the ball is being hit, they keep on playing something like a radio, they talk and dance and sing a song like this d s It d s It d d d d d:
When this begins, people join it beating and clapping hands and making noise everywhere.

Those who do the throwing are called "pitchers." The good throwers make the ball go like lightning, going something like 95 or up to 100 miles an hour. The one hitting is the batter, the one catching is the catcher. There are also umpires, that is, referees. If someone makes a beautiful hit, the supporters begin to make a commotion, shout, rejoice, praise, dance, and clap hands. Some wave the flags they bought for the match. Music is played everywhere.

When they finished playing the ballgame, the "New York Yankees" had won over the "California angels." They each had one run, but when it got to the ninth "inning" the hero of the Yankees, Reggie Jackson, who was what they call a "run king," swung his bat and then hit the ball out very far away and the Yankees won the game. This is how the goals went:

	R	H	E
New York Yankees	6	10	1
California Angels	5	8	2

R means runs (mgbapu ozo)
 H means hits (nkyta bool)
 E means errors (nkyhie)

As it came near closing time, people started to blow whistles to show that the end was near. They kept this up until the last whistle was blown and a great commotion broke out.

Before it was over, the computer showed that the people at the ballgame and were inside the stadium numbered 30,109. That is thirty thousand, one hundred and nine people. They also said that when that stadium was filled, it would hold 60,000 people. The lights shining inside of it, both upward and downward, made it so that if one threw out grains of kola pepper on the ground at night you could see them and pick them up. But what I liked best was the singing that went on from time to time as the ball game itself progressed.

After the ballgame ended around 30 minutes past 11 in the evening, people with red hair, people with long hair, people with braided hair, people wearing various garments, streamed out of all the doors like when tiny ants scurry away when they are chased, they went surging out of other doors and many of them going across the field.

When we went outside, I went and bought several of the souvenirs they were selling, like baseballs, flags and various pictures. I must mention here that Americans have various ways to take people's money without begging. They display beautiful things for tourists that will entice any tourist and he buys them.

Now it was time to leave. Don't forget that from New York to New Haven, Connecticut, it was about 76 miles. We started to walk toward the place where our vehicle was parked. As we were walking, there was a large building nearby that was something like eleven stories high.

The sign showing what that building was said, "Department of Correction." When I asked, they told me that it was their prison (kõnpita). As we were passing, some people in that building were replying to them by calling them "Jail Bird." This word "jail bird" is what they call someone who goes in and out of prison and it means nothing to him.

I saw that their prisons were not like ours. Their prisons had air conditioning in them.

Their prisons were as the name implied, which was to rehabilitate the criminal. And if they were rehabilitated, this was something that was part of their coming destiny. Some also were intelligent and that was worse.

We passed their building and walked to where our car was parked and headed out. We arrived home around two o'clock in the morning.

9 The United Nations Organization (UNO)

This means United Nations Organization. When World War 2 ended, an international organization was started, consisting of all the independent countries. The American president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, started it on January 1, 1942, when 26 countries came together to finish up the war. When it was ended on June 26, 1945, the organization was born. And on October 24, 1945, it was effectively inaugurated.

The purpose for founding the organization was to end the war and to make peace in all the world, as well as to join together for the welfare and progress of all countries and to grant independence to those who did not have it. They also tried to help the members of their group, without interfering in their interior affairs and ways of life and intruding into affairs of the country that did not concern them.

Around 1965, there were 124 countries in it. In this year of 1981 the number of countries in it has been something like 133.

The world headquarters of the organization is in New York. Their office building is right in the heart of New York, Manhattan, where people are as numerous as grains of sand. The population of New York is more than 7 million. This chief city also contains many, many skyscrapers.

Looking at their building, it is amazing. It is constructed near the East River in New York. The site covers more than 18 acres. Expert architects from

10 different countries constructed the building. It is 39 stories high. Construction was started in 1947 and finished in 1952. The hard-earned money that John D. Rockefeller, Jr. contributed, which was 8 million and some dollars (N8.5 million), gave it its start. But it was an interest-free loan of 60 million dollars plus 5 million dollars that Americans gave in order to finish it.

Repayment of this money that Americans gave began in 1951 and will be completed in 1982.

Entering this building, you will see what is written on a large wall of sacrifice on the left, facing the building. The writing comes from the Bible (Isaiah 2-4), which is . . .

The building is in four parts which is the meeting room, the room for its workers, the conference hall which is closest to the East River, and the room for the lending out of books which is called the Dag Hammarskjold Library.

At the right in front of the General Assembly building are flags of all the world's countries that are members of the United Nations Organization. Looking at them you see a beautiful sight because there is every color among them. The flag of Nigeria, which is white and green, was among the others and was flying around as though giving a special wave to someone coming from our country.

There are 7 entrance doors to the large building, which are made of nickel and bronze and were a gift from the country of Canada. Four of the door panels showed peace, true justice, truth and cooperation among all people.

Near the left side of the building there was a field. The grass in it was like a head that a barber has shaved closely, as though one had licked it smooth with his tongue. There was also a water fountain that was beautifully designed so that the water was sent up into the air and then gushed down.

As I was entering this building, many other white people of various kinds also flocked into the building like the day the Ogbaku people threw open their *mbari* house in the old days.

Before anyone wanting a complete tour of the interior was allowed in, he had to buy a ticket. On that day, the September 11, I joined those who paid the fee and followed the tour of 25 people. If the gathering amounted to something like 20 who had paid the fee, a guide was provided for them. In my group, there were something like 24 people, including two children. Our guide was a small young woman whose name was Mill Killstrong. She was a young woman who had been trained for that type of work. As she approached us, she started to speak very fast (frifri frifri). I was the only black person in the group. The others were

from Asia, India and various white countries. As the young woman led us along, she showed us a model of the United Nations Organization, that is a sculptured design of the U. N. O. to show people at a glance how its offices were arranged.

Looking at this drawing you see how the U. N. O. is organized. It is divided into six parts. The first one is where all the members meet together in plenary session.

Security Council

Trusteeship Council

General Assembly

International Court of

Secretariat

Justice at The Hague (Netherlands)

Economic and Social Council

The second one is the council dealing with security. The third is the council that oversees countries under the U. N. O. that are not yet independent. The fourth is the council dealing with the wealth and progress of all the countries. The fifth is the office of the group's secretary. All these councils are in that same building. The sixth branch is called a court whose fifteen legal experts are not based in New York. That one is located in The Hague, in the Netherlands. Nigeria used to have an Igbo lawyer on that world court. His name was Daddy Onyeama, from Ngwo Udi near Enugu.

On the floor from which we left there was a thing called a pendulum, like a ball hung on ropes, swinging on top of a machine that was inserted which was on the steps where one would climb up to the building if one wanted to go on foot.

The first place we went was the General Assembly Hall, where the world body held plenary sessions in which all the countries had people representing them. Inside it there were chairs arranged row by row and step by step from the ground level up. On the ground level were the head chairs where the chairman and the secretary sat. Counting all those chairs, they numbered 626 where the representatives of all the countries in the group sat. There were also 270 chairs for spectators, 234 for radio and television people and journalists and 800 for guests. So the total of all the chairs was 1,930. The murals in that building were the handiwork of a French artist called Fernand Leger.

To say that the chairs in this place were beautiful would not adequately describe them. The seats were very smooth. They had something called earphones on them so the seated person could take the one on his chair, put it on his ears, and he would hear what was being said in the meeting. As they spoke, their words were translated and were heard in five different languages at once. Those languages were English, French, Spanish, Russian and Chinese. It is amazing but that is what happens. But I was sorry that on that day, they were not in session.

It should be mentioned that countries that have representatives in the meeting of that General Assembly also pay dues. We also went into the Security Council room and entered that of the Economic and Social Council and that of the Trusteeship Council. They all were similar but the chairs in the General Assembly Hall were the best. Each room had a particular country that used its own style to beautify that chamber or put the chairs in it, except for the Security Council.

In the Secretariat, the number of people working for them throughout the world amounted to 20,022. Of this total, 6,000 worked in New York alone. These are the ones who work for of the world organization. It is not their governments who pay their salaries but rather this large organization pays them out of the fees paid by all the countries in the group pay. The chief of these workers is called the Secretary General, whose job lasts for five years at a time. The one who holds that position is Kurt Waldheim from Austria.

There is also a place where people can pray, called the meditation room. Because people of differing faiths meet there, they have prepared a special large room for praying or sitting quietly. It was set aside especially for its peacefulness and for the sake of the workers there. The decoration there and the electronic equipment included in it are the handiwork of a Swedish artist. There is also a room where one can borrow and read books, called the Dag Hammarskjold Library. It was named for a Secretary of the organization who died in an airplane accident while seeking peace among the nations.

It is important to mention the Security Council. It consists of 11 countries who are in the council meeting together. Five of them are there all the time. Six of the others are rotated. They are there to make peace or war or to intervene in any impasse. The 5 countries who are there permanently are England, France, Soviet Union, United State of America and China. These 5 countries have something special called "veto power." If within the meeting ten countries out of eleven are in agreement but one country of these five disagrees, they do not try to do the thing. This authority of theirs enables what is called the veto. While we were in their chamber, I was the first of our group to question the guide what would happen in such a case. She replied that there was nothing to be done except to try to persuade the others until such time as they agreed or let the matter drop. Power of the country! Another reason for this is that they pay higher fees than do the other countries.

The guided tours of the U. N. O. took one hour, and each group started 15 minutes before the next one following it. The cost of the guided tour was two dollars and 50 cents for adults. University students paid one dollar and a half, while those in college paid one dollar and children also paid one dollar.

As we had gone around everywhere and our allotted hour was up, the woman thanked us, we thanked her in return, she waved bye bye to us and left us.

After we were dismissed, I continued to wander around in the building's book shop where they were selling souvenirs and gifts. On entering, I saw some important people from our country looking around. They were led by one Mr. Ngam Nwachukwu, who was one of our Igbo people who worked in the building. They were well-known people. One was a chief of the Onicha people and another was the owner of Bolingo. We exchanged greetings in great happiness and I then thanked them for coming to tour the country. When they finished and went out, I myself purchased pictures, flags, books, thermometers and other items I would use to show that I had reached there in my journey. I finished quickly and then went out because my brother-in-law who was with me and my sister were in the car and had not gotten out because they had no place to park the car where the police would not come and drag it away. One thing that I liked here was that from top to bottom of this building, although it truly was a building belonging to the whole world together and numerous people came to it every second, every hour, every day, there was no place that you could say was not clean. Every place shone in spite of the fact that people milled around it in huge numbers. It was a building that should be the chief town in the whole world and should be a place where anyone able to get out should try to get to it and see it.

10 World Trade Center

When I finished touring the U.N.O. building, another place I was dying to visit was the two huge buildings that were like twins. Their name is the "World Trade Center." It is the market of the world. These two buildings are the same size. One is World Trade Center I and the other is World Trade Center II. The World Trade Center buildings are the highest in New York. The one called the "Empire State Building" is the second, being the next in height to the World Trade Center.

While the Empire State Building, which is near Pace in New York University, is one hundred and three stories high, the World Trade Center is higher, having one hundred and ten stories.

The highest building in the world is the Sears building in Chicago, U.S.A., but the highest manmade one (ihe aka ruru) in the world is a tower called Canadian National Tower, which is in Canada, north of the U.S. The World Trade Center faces two well-known streets. Those streets are Church Street and Fulton Street. There is also another street leading from the premises, and that is Vesey Street. There is also something called "Churchyard" or "burial ground" where they bury people belonging to a certain church called St. Paul's Church.

The land around these twin buildings is paved with cement. That land is larger than a couple of football fields. When you sit down and look at the two buildings, if you are not careful, it can overcome you with awe.

Entering one of these buildings is not easy. You must have bought a ticket. Adults pay two dollars and twenty-five cents. College and university students pay one dollar and twenty-five cents. One who pays his fee stays in line waiting for his turn and hopes that he will join the trip to the very top of that building. People are milling around there like a swarm of bees flying and buzzing around. Some are coming down, some have already gone up, some are going to the left, others are going to the right, back and forth. You should see it.

After we paid the fee we pressed on, joined the line and got on the escalator. This escalator consists of electric steps that are pulled along. As it moves, it pulls upward all the people who are on it. If people have the energy, they will climb it quickly like the way we climb many storied houses in our country now. We got off the escalator twenty people at a time. After we had all entered this area they closed its door. We were then inside of what is called a "lift" in British English but they call it elevator in their American dialect.

We were told that the elevator was going to take us up like a car running 20 miles an hour and would go at top speed to the 58th, then take us up to the 108th floor. After this we would have penetrated the top and would set foot on the 108th floor.

All of the floors we passed were completely filled with people buying and selling and doing various other kinds of work. In the same way, there were those who moved around and various kinds of business people, both those who exchanged in the gold market and those with other names, filling the place. All of the people that building holds, workers and traders, all those who work there, would reach 1,500. This is to show how large that building is, in width and height. After climbing to the 107th floor, we got on another escalator and climbed up to the last floor, which was the 110th.

Any person who reached there would feel as though he had been suspended between the sky and the earth. It seemed that if they had not used big support beams to construct that building, you would have said that only the wind blowing there could touch it. Staying there and looking out would frighten a fearful person-- his hair would stand on end! While we were there on top of the world looking out, it seemed as if there were no other person or thing up there. And as we were going about our own business, various airplanes were flying as well. And from the place where we were at the time it seemed as if we could touch them.

On top of that place they also put something else that was expensive and was a means of looking outward. That thing was a telescope. You put in 25 cents, which was one-fourth of a dollar, and you could then look into it and would be seeing everything in New York for 20 miles in any direction you looked. After I paid the fee and looked out, I saw all the buildings one could see for those 20 miles and they looked as though they were very close. I continued to look right and left, behind me and in front of me. But as I kept on looking, at one point I could not see anything. I told the people with me that I could not see anything, and they told me that the money I had put in had expired. Since it had used up my money I tried to put in more money but when I stuck my hand in my bag and saw that I had no more money and I was also going to buy souvenirs and gifts from that place, I left off.

From then on I used the naked eye to see everything that I could. From there it seemed that one could see the entire city of New York with the ocean behind it and its Statue of Liberty. Building after building looked as though asha birds had built their nests there together, the cars looked like one big chunk of orange. I asked myself, how many people did it take to construct this building, which god also gave them such an excess of knowledge and wisdom to build things like this? It was wonderful!!

While we were there, taped messages were played, telling the people that there were items for sale; food, books, garments, cloth, gold, handicrafts, and said that anyone wanting them could obtain them at this door or the other. He also invited that those who had finished and were leaving to come back for a return visit.

We went to the place where various kinds of food and drink were being sold, bought the things we wanted and took them to a place where they had put chairs to rest in, and we stayed there to take our refreshments. But like one who wanted to see everything there was to see (it was not like a monkey behavior when a bullet drops on its head), I entered the rest room to refresh myself. I turned on the faucet there and washed my hands and drank a little. The provision of cold and hot water there is the same all over the country in other places as well. The way the water ran on the ground in the same way that it ran on top of this building where we were now was really like being in heaven. While I was there they went to the telephone there and put in ten cents (about 8 kobo) and called a certain student of mine whom I had taught and who lived in New York with her husband at that time. It was amazing! The water ran without giving out. The telephone worked 24 hours a day. The lights never went off. The electricity worked all the time without complaints or arguments from anyone. What I then asked about ourselves who live in our country was what was used to work on our lights and water and electricity--was it good? Those who built our own - did they build theirs well?

Finally we finished buying all the various gifts and souvenirs of that place. However, things were a little more expensive there than in other places. We began to descend in the same way we had climbed up. As we were descending I wished I could stay a little longer. But everything has a beginning and an end. After we reached the ground, we saw all the various shops and banks and stores where people sold lots of things like books, sweets, pictures, all kinds of nice hair oil, cigars, children's toys, and especially those who were able to exchange any kind of money you wanted. While this was going on, the place was filled with photographers of all kinds, clicking away, and people scurrying by. When we came down like people who had descended from Mt. Everest, we also took some pictures of our own. I moved around here and there to take them. The front of the building was beautiful and going up in it was a great experience. It is better to see it in person and go up in it than to hear a story about it. Otherwise, if one does not get to the place where it is or even see it, let alone go up in it, one is like an ordinary person dreaming about driving a car.

11 Capitol

If a person came to Imo State but did not go to Owerre, the capitol of Imo State, it would be like someone eating a whole fish except for its head, since some people believe that a good fish head provides something the body needs.

By the same token, if a person came to Nigeria but did not get to Lagos, his journey would have gone wrong. It would not be complete. What it means is that if I went to the U.S. and went all over but did not set foot in their capital city, yet still told stories about it, it would be like food that was completely cooked but without salt.

On another day we took the bull by the horns and took off for Washington, which is the seat of government of the whole U.S. We reached New York, crossed into New Jersey and then finally arrived at this large city. This city is different from the others; it is the Capitol, as they call it. The buildings in Washington are not so tall as those in New York or the other cities. What is the reason for this?

We know that this city was named after George Washington. After he died, for the purpose of remembering or honoring him a tall building was erected in his name called "George Washington Memorial Statue." The building is very tall and narrow like *koso* that one has turned face down with its tail going upwards. [Refers to a child's game played with the cap of a Bic pen.]

Out of respect and honor, they then decided that no one, neither an ordinary person nor the government, should erect a building that would be taller than the Washington Monument. This is why all the buildings built in

Washington are of equal size. They are not higher than two or three stories. Even the house of their president has two stories. Their chief city, the Capitol, has various large buildings, including the building for their legislators which is "Parliament." (Congress) When I arrived at the front of this building, I saw how they decorated it with beautiful flowers. They also used flowers to write the name of this building. On the left they wrote SENATE and on the right they wrote HOUSE. There were also red and yellow flowers planted that they used to form the writing.

In this capitol there was also a building for various government workers called "secretariat," and there was also the building they called "Smithsonian Institution" where various antique items were housed. In addition, all the commemorative places like the "Jefferson Memorial," "Washington Memorial Cemetery" were all around there. There was also a field in front of their Senate building which had a rounded dome on top of it. Gorgeous flowers were used to beautify it. I stood among these flowers near the sculptures and took pictures. In this field that day, ball-players were organizing their teams while waiting for their turn to play. It was wonderful to see this. At this time, since it was summer and the sun was very hot, people selling small items were all over the place. These people were selling everything that people could use as souvenirs and gifts from all over the world, garments, flashlights, books, cups, pen thermometers, balls, combs, even cake, biscuits, ice cream and any other thing you can name that people like. The place was like the old days when "Empire Day" was held in our country.

12 Arlington Memorial Cemetery

If someone goes to Washington but doesn't go to Arlington Memorial Cemetery, I think his journey is incomplete. In our country, burial places are not well-cared-for. In some places the bush grows over them. But in developed countries, the grave where a person is buried is beautified because it is the final place, a place of rest for rich and poor. I think it is a good and desirable thing to decorate and arrange it, plant beautiful flowers, and make its paths attractive to look at and walk on.

The place called "Arlington Memorial Cemetery" is a burial place for American soldiers. Those soldiers are from: Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Mexican War, War Between the States (Civil War), the fighting in India, the Spanish-American War, the Philippines War, all the world wars (first and second), Korean War and Vietnamese War. All the soldiers who died in them, both known and unknown, people great and small, all are buried in this huge cemetery. This cemetery covers something like 1,100 acres. The land was bought in 1778 but they started to bury people there in 1864. It was finished in 1883 and they completed the documents used to hand it over to the U. S. Government, which paid \$150,000.

Since then many soldiers have been buried there, including two American presidents, William Howard Taft and John Fitzgerald Kennedy, and including the graves of one soldier each who fought in the first and second world wars and the Korean war whose names were unknown and known only to God. Their graves are marked "KNOWN BUT TO GOD." Their graves are guarded every hour of every day. If you go about six o'clock when they are changing the guard, it is interesting to see as they march there and salute each other.

Before entering the cemetery, some pay the fee to ride in a tour vehicle. This is call "tour-mobile." The vehicle is a long bus with windows all over it. It is painted red and blue. You pay the fee and enter and then wait. When it is filled, they take off for the road that leads to the cemetery supervisors' office and listen to a talk or buy pamphlets that explain the various sights to be seen there. In this cemetery, all the doors have been painted with coal tar. The areas where there are no graves have been planted with bahama grass, a type of grass that grows slowly and is kept well-mowed, like when a barber has just shaved a head. There are also water fountains here and there. If a tourist gets tired he simply turns on a faucet and drinks. I drank water there and washed my hands so thoroughly that the people I was with told me that it could be that the water came out of the bodies of the dead. That did not bother me because I said that the builders of that cemetery knew what was what.

The graves there are all in rows and fill the space like soldier ants lined up for war. Seeing at it causes tears, even as I write and remember it, because all those there, up to several thousand, are our fellow human beings created by God.

In several places were written the names of those whose names were known, and their dates of death. In other places there were all written together about 2,111 whose names are unknown who died in the two wars, 111 whose names are unknown who died in the civil war, and 215 people who died in the Sea of Lunga in the Solomon Islands in World War II, and several others.

Important, well-known people who are buried there have fully marked graves, such as:

1. Major Walter Reed, U.S.A., Section 3, Lot 1864, grid T-16
2. General Henry H. Arnold, U.S.A.F., Section 34, Grave 44-A, Grid V-11
3. William H. Taft (27th President of the U.S.), Section 30, Grave S-14, Grid Y.Z.-39 1/2
4. Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Grid S-23
5. Lt. J. F. Kennedy, U.S.N. (35th President of the U.S.), Section 45, Grave S-45, Grid U-35
6. S2 Robert F. Kennedy, U.S.N.R. (Attorney General, U.S. Senator), Special Lot 45-A, Grid UV-34

These will serve as examples.

Since we had gone there in our car, we drove it in and parked it where others had parked their vehicles and then went around on foot as we pleased.

We came to the grave of Lt. John F. Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States, who had been assassinated. Because of his accomplishments, the Americans buried him there and placed a torch in the ground at the head of his grave. The torch is always burning. They say that it will burn forever.

This president was in office only two years, from 1961 to 1963, before he died. Where he was buried they had exhumed the bodies of his two children who preceded him in death, a boy and a girl, and buried them near him, one on the right and one on the left. An iron chain and silver rings surrounded the grave and there were tiny stones scattered on top of it. Guards were stationed there to watch over it.

If you cross the J. F. Kennedy grave, you reach that of his brother, Senator Robert Kennedy, who is buried in a different place. Near their graves there is a wide slab of stone used for inscriptions where they wrote some special meaningful words that they both had spoken when they were alive and by which they are remembered. I stood by the grave of J. F. Kennedy and took pictures, including some that were placed on slides for me. It is a great honor that they accorded it.

If people know the location of their people's graves, when the time comes for them to commemorate their deaths, the families or friends go and get permission and then they take flowers and decorative plants there to beautify their graves. The graves have been painted an attractive white so that on viewing them, one could forget that they were places where people's heads were laid down in the sleep of death. It took us a little more than two hours here before we looked around as much as we could and then went out to get our automobile and left.

When we reached the office of the cemetery supervisors, their guard gave us some pamphlets that explained about the graves, but we also purchased a few because they use the money to preserve that place. All of their roads are clean. There are also containers everywhere for putting in litter and trash. Because of it and the way they live, one does not throw out anything, especially ice cream wrappers, in a careless way. Such a person would feel ashamed. One who is seen throwing out anything at all without placing it in the trash container would not be well regarded.

There are some things that are expected of those who visit the cemetery.

1. The cemetery should not be used as a gathering-place for laughing and joking.
2. Visitors should not deface the earth or dig into it, or plant or harm any tree or flower there, or behave in such a way as to show that they do not want to accord those people's graves the honor owed to such a place.

3. Small flags will be used to decorate the cemetery for about 24 hours on the day after the memorial service for those people. The flags will be removed when the memorial service day has ended. One will not see those flags the next day on any grave.

4. Cut flowers can be placed on top of a grave at any time. One can place flowers in pots one week before Easter. One can put in artificial flowers from October 10 to April 15. Artificial flowers are not wanted from that time until October 9. They do not want anything molded, pots, glass or any obstruction at any time. One may not tie anything such as wire at the head of any grave.

5. Announcements concerning when to bring in and how to take out floral decorations are posted in the office of the superintendent.

6. Those who come to see these graves will take the path made for pedestrians or will use the vehicles called "Tourmobiles." A parking place for vehicles is available for visitors.

Guests who come to visit the graves of their families or friends will receive a small permission slip for their time there. They will be able to drive their vehicle in and park it in the visitors' parking area.

Those who want to get a permission slip to go at their desired time to visit their friends or relatives who are buried there can receive it by writing to:

Office of the Superintendent
Arlington National Cemetery
Arlington, VA 22211
U. S. A.

This is how these people arrange the places where they have buried their people, those who loved them and fought for them and those who did great things for them and benefited and honored their country. They changed a place of tears into a place of spectacular beauty.

These are the words of John F. Kennedy that are written on his grave:

Because of it the citizens of America my countrymen
You should not ask what your country can do for you.
You should ask what you can do for your country
My fellow citizens of the world, you should not ask
What America can do for you
Rather let us strive together
So we may know what we can do
For the welfare of all mankind.

13 White House

Just as we have the house of the Onicha Obi which is well known as the home of the chief of the Onicha people's chief, we know too that Buckingham Palace is well known as the place where the head of the British people lives.

Just as there are houses for these chiefs, the Americans have a house where their President lives. You know that in 1979 Nigeria started to have a government headed by a President. We (are sure) that it was the American system of government that Nigeria observed before starting theirs. The house where the American President lives is called the "White House." Like its name, the house is really white. It is painted with a white paint that makes it shine.

In front of it is an open space with buildings surrounding it. There are also various kinds of long, slender water fountains. These fountains have different ways of spouting upwards and downwards. There are small plastic seats all over the open space where people can sit and rest and talk. It is not only people who gather there. Animals are there too. Squirrels are there, jumping around from one tree to another to reach the other squirrels. And those who have been to London, the capital city of England, and have gone to see "Trafalgar Square" and "Nelson's Column," if they come to this place will think they are in Trafalgar Square in London.

When Tinubu Square in Lagos was at the height of its fame, like when its fountains were running and people were taking care of it, it bore some resemblance to what the fenced area facing the American White House was like.

There is a certain hotel and eating-house in Owerre called "White House." This building is also white like the American White House but where its location in Owerre is small and narrow compared to the American one. The head of our land, let alone our Governor, does not live in Owerre.

Several buildings surround the American White House or are near it. Some of these other famous buildings are the Washington Monument, which was constructed in memory of George Washington, the one for whom this American capital was named. This building in memory of George Washington is tall. In order to honor the first president of the Americans a law was made that any building built in Washington should not surpass this building in height. Another one is the "Capitol" building of their Congress and the court, the National Gallery of Art, the Jefferson Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Smithsonian Institution, which have various guards and reception centers. These famous buildings surrounding the White House are more beautiful to see than to read about. But not one of them is taller than the Washington Monument.

The White House itself has two stories but the compound is very spacious. The water fountains in front of it spray up water every hour, every day without stopping. And the flowers that surround the house are such that if you start looking at them, you don't go to work. All the colors of the rainbow can be seen in these flowers. I couldn't resist gazing at them.

I went up close and my picture was taken showing the flowers and their beauty. I also wanted to catch one of those squirrels but they told me it was against the law to catch them. Instead I tried to catch one of them in a picture. Those squirrels had become good friends with people. It was fun to watch them. Their behavior was amusing.

Going to the American White House was wonderful. On a few days of the week they allow anyone who wants to enter the house to go in and look around. The person will be able to enter and go all around, because it was the people's money, their tax money, that was used to build it. The person will be able to go everywhere in the house except the bedroom and the private quarters of the President himself. This is one example of how the American way of life is different from others. The White house is truly a white house. I did not go inside it because that was not a day when the general public was allowed to enter it. On that day, President Jimmy Carter himself was having a meeting; it was a time when they were seeking votes for another term of office.

When I was telling about the White House and the buildings near it, I mentioned the names "Washington Monument" and "Jefferson Memorial." This Washington Monument was shaped to be very tall, and was carved to a point at the top. Many workers in various offices are located there. It is said that more than 1,000 people work there. It was built in memory of the first American president, George Washington. Jefferson Memorial is a building that was made very tall, with columns surrounding it, in memory of Jefferson, the architect, who made America famous. That is why the name of America will never be forgotten.

14. Philadelphia

As I said in another place in this book, the Americans call this city the "City of Brotherly Love."

It is also in this city that they took their independence from the British government. At first it was the capital city of America. Therefore, if a person travels to America but does not set foot in Philadelphia, it will be like one who eats up all the good food quickly but does not drink water to wash it down.

This city is beautiful. There are banks and restaurants and various kinds of recreation. We know that many of those who have money in America are the Jews. They are not very numerous in this city but they hold more of its wealth. Some of the money-generating businesses you will see are: