

Hollo Gang:

Feb ? 1943

It's been several weeks since I have found time to write you. The reason is fairly simple. It requires a typewriter to make the five copies of the letter that I must make to send to all of you, and since I have access to one only on weekends or when I am on then if anything turns up to keep me from typing on weekends no letter gets written. Two weeks ago it was New Orleans that kept me from writing. Last weekend nothing of major importance occurred but apparently I wasn't in the mood for writing - at any rate it didn't get done. This week the pangs of conscience have made me decide to make every effort to get this written. Even with all this procrastination I still feel that on the whole most of you will get the letter earlier than if it had been written on time and sent via the chain.

As you may remember, I wrote the last letter when I was M.O.D. The following morning I was unexpectedly assigned to replace the doctor with the 333 Field Artillery as he had been called home suddenly. I had no way of calling Ros to let her know of this change, and since she was expecting me to be home that evening, I knew she would be alarmed if I didn't show up. As I was going to be in the field overnight I had to get someone else to call home that evening, but unfortunately he forgot to do so. Consequently Ros had a little excitement trying to determine just what had happened to me, but after numerous phone calls she was able to piece together enough of a story to figure out where I was. The week I spent with the Field Artillery was interesting, but I'd hate like the devil to be permanently attached to them. The doc spends a lot more time in the field under much less comfortable conditions than we in the clearing company do. At any rate I spent the mornings examining patients on sick call. One morning I saw 75 patients from 7:30 until noon. This was equivalent of 1 out of every 8 soldiers in the battalion. They had nothing to use in examining the men. A stethoscope was the only aid I had. No tongue blades, head mirror, otoscope, or any of the essentials that every doctor carries in his bag. It was the most exasperating situation that I have encountered since I have been in the army. I had to send patients with ear ache to ear clinic just to have someone look in the ear. Some of the clinics were not to be held for days, and it became a matter of deciding whether the patient was sick enough to be sent into the hospital just to have his ear looked at, or waiting a few days until ear clinic was held. Probably by that time the ear would have quieted down or gotten worse and require hospitalization. If this is a sample of what governmental medicine is to be like, God save me from state medicine. As far as medication was concerned, this was limited to 3 or 3 medicines, aspirin, aspirin compound, nose drops, and a cough mixture the ingredients of which no one knew. It was horrible. The men have no faith in the doctor because regardless of complaints, they almost all get the same medicine, and the doctor is hopelessly dissatisfied because of lack of materials and medicaments. Give me my small town practice any day. My patients were a hell of a lot better off than these boys in the army.

At 3 P.M. I entered the ambulance and joined the tail end of a convoy of trucks headed for the artillery range. The guns are towed on the back end of the trucks. There are 4 guns (105 mm. Howitzers) per battery, and 3 firing batteries in the battalion, which makes a total of 12 105 mm. howitzers. We arrived at our destination at 4 P.M. just in time to hear a tremendous crash a couple of hundred yards to our right. Since the artillery range was on our left we immediately suspected that some battery had miscalculated on its firing problem, and now, investigation was made immediately by the superior officers of our group and our impression was confirmed. Since the area that shells are supposed to fall in was more than a mile to our left, this shell was obviously more than a mile from its target. Someone was certainly due to get chewed for such a bad mistake. Regardless who fired the gun, that someone was the safety officer. I'll explain that a little farther on. The shell was a 155 mm. one which is capable of destroying everything within 100 yards of its burst, and I hate to think what would have happened to us if it had fallen just a little more to the left. Xnm



The problem of our field artillery was to go into bivouac area until some time during the night when we were to move forward in total blackout and set up for firing. About 2 miles ahead of us was a regiment of infantry, and the shooting was to be done so that the shells landed about 400 yards in front of them. This was to get the infantry accustomed to shells flying overhead, and to give them faith in the accuracy of their own artillery fire. The first night was cold so I slept in the ambulance beneath several blankets. Even so it would become cold and every few hours we would run the ambulance in order to have the heater warm up the place. Periodically through the night we were visited by one or another of the officers of the field artillery who got too cold to sleep and would come into the ambulance to get warm enough to be able to go back to sleep again. About 4 A.M. they decided to move forward, and it was quite an eerie sight. The moon was bright so that it was not at all difficult, but watching truck after truck moving out from under the trees to join a silent column on the road, dark except for the spots on the taillights and headlights, was quite impressive. The tail lights each have 4 small red figures grouped in 2 pairs. At 25 yards each pair of figures fuses into one, so that if you see a car ahead of you you can tell that you are 25 yards behind it if you see only 2 red dots instead of 4. At 100 yards the two fused figures further fuse into 1. Thus it is simple for the drivers in convoys at night to tell how far ahead of them the vehicle in front is. We drove forward a couple of miles in the dark, and the guns were set up into position, but no firing was done until 10 A.M. I had never seen any firing so I went forward to watch it. I had been told that you can actually see the shell as it leaves the gun and flies through the air. I got myself all set behind the gun to watch for the shell as it left the muzzle, but when the gun went off I was so startled by the noise that in each case I forgot to look for the shell. The noise really wasn't as loud as I expected it to be, yet it was quite startling to the uninitiate. Each gun fired 3 shells and then our problem was ended and we began to get ready to return. I talked to the officer at the battery while we prepared to leave and learned a few things about the field artillery. In order to take all precautions for safety they have range guards who permit no one to enter areas into which shells are being fired. In addition to this the artillery itself has a safety officer whose duty it is to allow no shell to be fired until he has checked each gun as to elevation and direction, so that he knows just where the shell is going to land. He is thus held accountable for any damage that shells falling outside their proscribed area should cause. This means that the safety officer not only gets hell for mistakes, but he also has to pay for any damage the shell may cause.

The day after we returned from the field we again repeated the problem. The men told me that they have been doing this same problem twice a week for the past three weeks and that it was getting quite monotonous. However, since it was only the second time that I had gone out with the field artillery it was still not at all monotonous to me. This time the weather was very warm so I slept outside the ambulance on a litter, and it was just glorious. The sky was just beautiful with stars, and when the moon came up it was almost as bright as day. The only drawback was the mosquitoes. They just eat you up. I hoped that the anopheles wasn't among those that fed on me. This time when we moved forward we passed by the tail end of the infantry which was moving forward at the same time. The infantry moved forward silently, one column on each side of the road. There was no talking, and no smoking. Just a silent column of men moving forward along each side of the road. Each bridge was guarded by soldiers with rifles held in readiness for any contingency. On this problem I stayed back at the command post when the firing was going on. This is the nerve center of the artillery, where calculations are made and forwarded to each battery of guns giving them specific directions as to what corrections to make in firing each volley of shells. They have an observer forward with the infantry who is in telephonic communication with the command post and who lets them know where the shells fall with respect to the target. The first shells which are fired are fired for direction. Usually they land a little more than 100 yards over



the target and a little to the left or right. Next they try to fire a little short of the target. The next shell usually lands right on the target, i.e. within 20 yards of the target. This is considered a hit. So much for the field artillery.

2 weeks ago Ros and I went to New Orleans. The town is absolutely packed and it is impossible to get a room in hotel or tourist camp. Since we had no reservations we ended by sleeping at the home of one of the lieutenants that had accompanied us. He lives in the country, 18 miles from the heart of New Orleans, and his back yard is the Mississippi levee, which turned out to be a large mound of soil running parallel to the river from New Orleans all the way up to the junction of the Ohio and the Mississippi at Cairo, Ill. Between the levee and the river is an area of land which is covered by the river during high stages. The depth of the river at New Orleans is more than 100 feet, but it really doesn't look any different than the Ohio except for greater traffic and the ocean liners which can be seen at various piers as you go up river. We learned quite a few small points of information about the Mississippi when we took a sight seeing boat trip up the river for about 15 miles during the afternoon.

Ros and I investigated the city thoroughly Sunday, and enjoyed it immensely, but we did get worn out. While waiting to meet the others with whom we had gone to New Orleans we rested in the lobby of the Roosevelt Hotel, and who should walk in but Arthur Mirsky. He is located in Florida at Miami Beach, and is head of the labs of 6 hospitals totalling 3000 beds. He is still a captain, although his position calls for a lieutenant colonel. He is dissatisfied because they are trying to bring in a superior officer to take charge after he did all the work of building up the labs from scratch. However, it seems that his commanding officer is on his side because he has the new officers transferred just as often as they are sent in, so that Mirsky is still in charge of the lab. Every few weeks he flies to Randolph Field, Texas, where he is being used as a consultant in some experiments on fatigue of fliers caused by high altitudes. He told me that he has run into Abe Schwartz who, if I remember rightly, is in Florida waiting for his hospital to be opened. To keep Abe busy, the army has sent him to 3 ~~fix~~ schools so far - all of which gave him identical courses - and when they started to send him to a fourth school for the same course, he balked and got away with it. He ~~was~~ (Art) was quite interested in David's work, but unfortunately I couldn't tell him very much about it, being somewhat vague about it myself.

Last week we had been out on another problem, similar to our previous ones. I learned my lesson the week before of not taking out my bedding roll for I caught a cold and chilled all night. Now with the bedding roll which consists of 2 blankets and a comfort wrapped in a canvas cover, I could crawl in between the covers and be quite comfortable sleeping on the ground. I got the opportunity to see the infantry in action, and it was quite impressive. It came about in the following manner. As intelligence officer, I got the idea of having one of the Japanese from the Japanese Battalion which has moved to our camp, to come and give us a talk on Pearl Harbor, since they were there on THE 7th of Dec. Unexpectedly I discovered that a Capt. Kawasaki (M.C.) was with them. I immediately became very interested in contacting him, for I suspected that he was the Kawasaki that graduated from med college in Ben's class. I'm still trying to meet him, but I'm almost certain he's the one. Well, Monday night the first platoon of our company, of which I am a part, worked until midnight and then the 2nd platoon took over. This gave me plenty time on Tuesday to go looking for Kawasaki. He was out in the field on the same problem in which we were taking part, but he was quite some distance forward (about 8 miles) so I got into the jeep of the medical umpire and rode forward with him. As we went forward at first we saw nothing but woods and a few isolated farms on each side of the road. Then suddenly we began to notice men in the woods, a few at first, increasing numbers as we drove forward. We passed several anti-



tank guns immediately at the side of the road, pointing to the rear - to protect the troops from anything which might attack from the rear. These were so well camouflaged that I didn't even see them until I had passed them and looked back on their uncamouflaged backs. The camouflage of all the infantry units is excellent and has almost become second nature to them. We stopped at the Collecting company which was in a grove of trees - their set up doesn't compare with ours. They merely had a litter stretched waist high between two cases. No tent - nothing to impress the soldier with the efficiency of the medical department. This is one of the main purposes in these problems - to impress the soldier with the fact that he will be well taken care of if and when he gets injured in battle. From the collecting station which was about 2 miles behind the front line, we drove forward to the command post - the brain of the unit. Here we watched the commanding officer and his aides S1, S2, S3, S4, receiving information from farther forward by messenger, radio, telephone, and telegraph, and dispensing the necessary orders. This was not exactly new to me for I had seen the same type of thing at intelligence school. However, this was the first time I had seen the ranking officers of the regiment and artillery etc. working together.

We next moved forward another half mile to the battalion aid station, which consisted of 3 litters on the ground - nothing more. It was a poor example of what a battalion aid station should really be like. We were now only 3/4 mile behind the front line, so we drove forward to see what might be going on up there. We arrived apparently immediately after the order had been given for the troops to move forward. It was spine-tingling to watch hundreds of men armed with rifles walk slowly forward - spread out in formation - and to visualize an enemy waiting on the other side of that slope up which they walked. The heavy machine guns were moved forward by 3 men, 1 carrying the main part of the gun, 1 the barrel, and the 3rd 2 cases of ammunition. It wasn't hard to picture actual combat going on. The site of Japs standing at the sides of the road with bayonets bared, helped the illusion considerably. The main object of my trip - Kawasaki - I learned was back in the woods, 2 swamps away from the road; swamps that were knee deep. I wasn't that eager to see him, so I decided to postpone my visit to some other day.

We in the clearing company, with our tents, operative set up, stoves, etc. have by far the nicest jobs of any of the medics associated with an infantry division. I hope that I can keep at least this, if not better myself in some hospital. However, there is a great question whether I'll even be able to stay. There has been a general shifting of medical officers out of our battalion. Of course they are taking all the old-timers first, and I understand that by the time maneuvers start, supposedly Apr. 12, all the old officers will have been shifted, and we new officers will be running the companies. This will leave us in line for promotions, but I'm afraid that I won't have much chance for the time being because practically all the others outrank me by 1 day or more. However if they continue to shift the officers, in time I should finally be ready for promotion. But I'm afraid that promotions is not the thing uppermost in my mind at present. Far more important is the leave which I am to get. I've already gotten my train ticket with Pullman reservation for Feb. 27, so that we should arrive in Cincy on Sun. Feb. 28 at 11:55 A.M. We're praying that nothing unforeseen upsets our plans. We expect to be in Cincy about 2 weeks, leaving on a Saturday.

The Mississippi Felsons all have colds. Don't envy us the warm summers down here, because they only result in constant colds. Otherwise everything in the country is quiet and peaceful.

Lots of love from all of us,  
Judy and Elaine, Ros and Walt.



Dear Leo:

We've heard your record + enjoyed it very much. We're sending it on to Louise.  
Don't try calling Sophie's March 1st. We're hoping that Chips + Ben + Louise will be in town  
at the same time that we are so that the whole family could call you at the same time.  
It will probably be a Sunday (March 7), but we can't be sure. Let us know how to reach  
you by phone - also by wire.

Walt.