

Sunday, 22 Aug. 43

Hello Gang:

Well, I'm finally getting around to the point of writing again. I feel that I must apologize to all of you for not having written before this, but I can give you alibis galore. However, that does not substitute for letters, so I won't try to alibi out of it.

I have so much to tell you that it's hard to know where to start, and just how much to tell, but I feel that in view of the fact that I am going through experiences that are quite different than the ones the rest of you are going through, that my letters will be more interesting if I do go into detail. In fact, I feel that my previous letters prove this idea of mine.

First of all let me tell you about my trip back to Cincy and return to the west coast. I was to leave Camp Pilot Knob (named after the mountain in our vicinity) at midnight on a Thursday night, but since everyone else was leaving earlier, I planned to sign out at 5 P.M. At 3 P.M. an order came down from the commanding general that no leaves were to be granted unless the soldier or officer had his own transportation. Immediately my commanding colonel went up to division headquarters and explained my situation to the general and fortunately the thick skull decided to make me an exception to the rule. Thank God for that, because I think I would have gone nuts if I had been refused then. My train was not due to leave Yuma for Los Angeles until 3:20 AM so I had the entire evening to kill in Yuma. By midnight there was nothing to do but return to the railroad station and wait for the train to come in. Soon they posted on the bulletin board a notice to the effect that the 3:20 train would be 3 hours late and that the 4 AM train would be only 1 hour late, so I had to join the long lines waiting in front of the ticket desk and have my ticket changed to the 4 AM train. This line, or rather three lines, never diminishing in length, had been in front of the desk since I had first stopped in the station at 6 PM to check my bags. They were practically all soldiers, and there were so many of them that I felt quite sorry for the ticket sellers who never seemed to get finished with their work.

The night was hot, as only nights in these desert towns can be, and it was most uncomfortable sitting around waiting for the train to come in. Finally another notice came up on the bulletin board that the train was going to be even later and I began to worry lest it get me in to LA too late to catch my plane. However, there was nothing to do but wait, which I did. Most of the soldiers were heading east, and there were at least three trains to the east before mine finally came. Despite the fact that they were to sell only enough tickets for the seats on the train, there were so many soldiers clamoring for these tickets that it was simply impossible to refuse them. Therefore, when a train would pull in, they would line the soldiers up and starting at the front end, the station master would go thru the train with the soldiers and seat them in every vacant seat. When all the seats had been taken and he saw the large number of soldiers remaining, he began to put them in the train as standees. Most of the boys were going pretty far east, and they were going to have a helluva time standing all of the way. The situation was really pretty awful. Fortunately for me, there were relatively few going to L.A. so that I had no trouble getting a seat. In fact there were only a few standing until we got to Indio, where hundreds of soldiers boarded the train, and practically no one got off. From there into L.A. was a nightmare, with hardly room to breathe. Then to top things off the air conditioner ran out of ice, right in the heart of the desert and it became far more uncomfortable on that train than it was in the desert itself. Since L.A. was only a few hours distant, I gave my seat to a mother and her child. She had been standing in the aisle trying to guard her suitcase and hold her child at the same time. My train, which had pulled in to Yuma 3 hours late, rushed against time for me and got me into the station at L.A. at 3:30 PM. The only way that I could make it to the airport on time was to take a cab to Burbank where the airport is located. On our way out we passed by the Lockheed plant just as the shifts were changing, and I never saw such a crowd of employees in my life. It was far more confusing than the crowd that leaves Crosley field after a Sunday double-header. The entire Lockheed plant is camouflaged from the view from the air with a type of netting with false plants, and paints on it. This was the first time that I had seen camouflage on a large scale, altho I did find some more of the same type of camouflage at the airport. I arrived with a half hour to spare, and now my only worry was whether I would get kicked off by some



me with priority. I had no priority whatsoever, outranking only a civilian with no priority, at any civilian with even a class 4 priority could ground me, so I really had something to worry about. In fact one of our officers who left a day or two before me was so sure that he could be kicked off the plane, that even tho he had reservations on the plane, he took a train instead. In order to prevent losing time if I should be kicked off in LA before the plane started, I talked to the gatekeeper at the air field, trying to get a ride in a bomber to Cincinnati, Columbus, or Indpls, but I had to go to another suburb (Inglewood) to get a ride in an army plane, so I decided to stick it out at the port there. Every time the loud speaker would call someone to the ticket desk, my heart would jump into my throat, for I was sure that they were calling me to tell me that I had been kicked off. Luckily I got away from there, and we headed for Boulder City, Nev. I didn't expect any trouble there, and sure enough I didn't have any. Then came Albuquerque, N.M. Who would ever think that Albuquerque was a busy air port too. I felt sure that I was safe there, but darned if I didn't get kicked off there. There were 3 of us that were kicked off, or rather 4; a sailor, an air force cadet, a new OCS lieutenant in the cavalry, and myself. There were 3 planes due in soon, but the clerk at the air port advised us to go to a hotel and he would call us there. So they took us to the hotel in a cab and paid for our hotel ~~last~~ bill. We were only there 2 hours when we were called back to the air port and learned that there were two seats available. The lieutenant had already decided to take a train to Kansas City, so that left 3 of us to take 2 seats so we tossed a coin and odd man was to be the loser. Well you can be sure that I was odd man, so I had to stay there and bid farewell to the sailor and air cadet. I then decided to spend the rest of the night at the air port in the hopes that I might get on the next plane going out. This was a fortunate move because it came in a bit late and I would not have had time to get out to the airport before it got away, had I stayed at the hotel. There was a song in my heart now because they had told me at the air port that I should have no trouble for the rest of the way in, and anyway I felt that I was well ahead of the train schedule anyhow, and that I had not actually lost time by taking the plane. The rest of the trip, via Amarillo, Wichita, Kansas City, St. Louis, Indianapolis, and finally Dayton and then Cincinnati, was without incident except for the fear at every stop that my name would be called. You have already heard about the telegram errors by the Western Union and the two unnecessary trips Ros made to the airport to get me, but those were merely irritating incidents in a very nice trip. I really don't have much to say about the plane trip because I slept very much of the way home since I had not been to bed for two nights. The hostesses were delightful, the food delicious. I did get somewhat air sick over the desert during the first part of the trip because of the bumping and sudden drops made when in the vicinity of the mountains, but this soon passed off. There was one time when the plane descended for a landing while I was asleep, and I did not get the opportunity to equalize the pressure in my middle ear by swallowing or yawning, and I awakened with a moderately severe earache and deaf as could be, but this passed off in about half an hour.

It was swell seeing Soph, Irv, Rosalyn, and especially Ros waiting there to meet me. Of course Phil was there too. We had a swell time talking until the wee hours of the morning. Edie came over as did Gimmy. Ben, I'm sorry that I didn't have time to visit your kids, I certainly would have liked to see that genius of a son of yours. As far as my kids were concerned Elaine did not recognize me, but she had again accepted me as her father before the day was over. Judy was so overcome when she first saw me that she burst into tears and couldn't talk for quite some time. However, she made up for that later. She had grown considerably taller, and Elaine had changed so much in my eyes that I don't think that I would have recognized her if I hadn't remembered what Judy had looked like when she had been Elaine's age.

We left Cincy the following morning and headed for Greenfield in order to pack and get on our way. We were to head thru Dayton and Indianapolis in order to see Ben. Unfortunately the radiator began to boil when we got into Dayton and a man at the garage said that it was due to the thermostat in the car, so he removed it, and it was stuck as he said. However this did not cure the ailment, because just as soon as I had driven 3 or 4 more miles it was boiling again. I took it to another garage and they told me that the radiator would have to be boiled out with acid because when the water in it had boiled it had broken loose all the rust which seems to accumulate in all radiators, and this rust had plugged up the spaces in the radiator and the air was unable to get in to cool the motor. Since nothing could be done on a Sunday, we were stuck until the following day. This put us 24 hours behind my planned schedule, and it meant



that I'd really have to rush to make it on time, back to camp. We stopped in INdpls to eat and I tried to reach Ben but with no success. No one seemed to know just where he had gone. I talked to Bob Bachmeyer (Is that right Ben? If so, is that Dean Bachmeyer's fat, husky son Bob) but still could get no satisfaction as to Ben's whereabouts, and since I wanted to make St. Louis that night, I couldn't hang around in the hopes that I'd be able to find Ben. All of us felt bad about it, even the kids, because they had been looking forward to seeing their uncle Ben. So off we headed for St. Louis. I was driving a steady 60 - 70 miles per hour in order to make up the lost time and we really covered ground in a hurry. We followed the suggestions of the AAA as to tourist courts, and Duncan Hines for eating, all the way across the country, and they were tops in every case. If any of you do any traveling at all don't fail to follow the advice of both of these. They made our trip across the country a very pleasant one.

Tuesday we traveled from St. Louis to Tulsa. Outside Springfield, Mo. we ruined a tire and were we sick. We didn't actually have a flat tire, but the rubber of one of the front tires pulled loose from the fabric in the tire, and ruined it. We had planned on spending some time with Louise and David and their family, and fortunately I was able to get Ros and the kids out there, but I was busy with the ration board getting a used tire to replace the one I had ruined. Fortunately, there was no difficulty on this score and I left Springfield with a used tire for a spare which wasn't much good, but which would at least act as a spare. We had a swell time at Louise's and the kids really enjoyed playing together. However, we had to leave much sooner than we would have liked, because I had to make Tulsa that night. Louise thanks a lot for that swell meal, I'm sorry that I haven't had the chance to write you a letter thanking you before this. We'll stop to see you again if I get the chance to take my family home when we are thru with this mess in the desert.

Wednesday we ended up at Tucumcari, N. Mex., and Judy was all eyes watching for Indians. The kids behaved beautifully throughout the entire trip across country. The weather was swell over the entire route, being quite cool because of the height of the plateau when we got farther west. We had fixed the car so that Elaine's mattress was on the back seat and the kids could nap while we were driving along. It also gave them a place to ~~make~~ play that was much roomier than the front seat. The car, as you would expect, was terribly loaded, but this did not seem to slow us down particularly. I had dropped my speed to 50-55 miles per hour after ruining that tire, because I was hoping and praying that I wouldn't have any more tire trouble. Fortunately I didn't. In fact as far as the car was concerned, the trip was uneventful except from the two difficulties mentioned.

Thursday we stayed at Flagstaff, Ariz. I had caught up with our schedule, and this meant that we could spend a day at the Grand Canyon. We started out early Friday morning and saw the painted desert on our way up to the canyon. We spent most of the rest of the day at the canyon itself. I won't try to describe this to you as it is beyond anything that I could even attempt to write, or even Leo could do justice to. It's something you have to see for yourself. All I can say about it is that it is amazingly beautiful, and much larger than I had ever visioned it might be from the things I had read about it. It is the most beautiful and impressive sight that I have ever seen, and I, too, have seen many beautiful sunsets. Leo, if you should ever get the chance, that is the place to go on your honeymoon.

After leaving the canyon, we decided to drive to Blythe, California that night, in order to have less of the desert to go thru the following day. At Prescott, Ariz. we began to descend from the mountains. Unfortunately it was at night and we did not get to see the scenery which must have been just beautiful. The road twisted and turned constantly as it went down the mountainside and the lower the altitude became, the hotter the air became. Finally when we had descended, even though it was night time, it was stifling hot. We drove on to Blythe through the heat, and early the next morning traveled thru the desert to Indio. It was the hottest day that I had seen in the desert, chiefly because of the humidity. In the area around our camp the air is very dry, and therefore not too uncomfortable, but in this area the humidity was excessive and most uncomfortable. However, we arrived in Indio so soon that we decided to go to Palm Springs, the winter resort of the movie stars, to see if we could get a house for rent because this was nearer to the new location to which we were going to move our division. However, it was impossible to find a house so we headed to Calexico to the house that I had rented. We were all affected by our trip thru the desert, especially Ros.

The kids drank more water on that trip than they usually do in a week. I made it back to camp in plenty of time to sign in so everything ended happily. More in the next letter.