

Hi sweets:

7 July 1944 3 PM

I decided to start to-morrow's letter now, while I have some time to spare, since I find that I get tied up in the mornings, and have to cut my letters short.

First of all I want to answer a question or two that you asked in the three letters which I received last nite. Regarding the dates on those letters being postmarked before the date I had written on the letter, I imagine it was one of two things that caused this. Either I was wrong in my date, which is very easily done because we lose all sense of time when we are in combat, or (and I think this is more likely) the APO forgot to change the date on the stamp with which they were marking the mail. As far as my letters being read by anyone, whomsoever, I think that even the idea is ridiculous. The mail is handled by mail clerks at all times and could not possibly get in anybody else's hands. Our mail clerk receives my letters just before he takes them to the battalion mail clerk, which he does just before the mail leaves the battalion for the division post office. It would be impossible for the mail to be intercepted in this phase of its transportation. Obviously, the only possible way for my mail to be read by the battalion group would be if it was returned by the censor for some infraction of rules, and since most of the letters go uncensored, and since I am careful not to write anything which might be construed as a violation of censorship rules, I don't think that we have to worry on that score. The business of censorship is a delicate thing at best, since it infringes on the freedom of speech, and as a result, in order to prevent being accused of prying into affairs which have nothing to do with censorship, the postal authorities are extremely careful even to the extent of not permitting officers to talk about the contents of letters, despite the fact that they might be extremely amusing or have some special significance. They actually take disciplinary measures on those who are caught violating these rules. That is what happened with the one letter that was returned to me. For that reason I have never felt any hesitancy about writing anything which I wanted you to know, despite the fact that it might have caused no end of embarrassment if it had gotten into the hands of the people about whom I was writing. So don't worry about what I write.

All packages which you have, or will receive from me, are thoroughly deloused, which is a prerequisite to mailing. Probably the brown spots on the linen were caused by the delousing powder (the famous DDT). The copper kettle is not the one which I had cleaned up. I received the one you've gotten the morning that I mailed the package, and didn't take the time or trouble to clean it up. The other copper kettle will be received by Mrs. Vandeman and it may be a good time for you to visit her, when she writes you that she has received it. Her baby girl was born on the 23rd.

Those curls of Judy that you sent me brought back fond memories. They were only 8 days in arriving. Her hair is just as soft and silken as when I used to run my fingers thru it and kiss it. How much of a haircut did you give her? Tell her I'll carry her curls with me along with her pictures.

Last nite they had a non-com's dance at the officers club in town, and the three sgts. of mine that went there got dead drunk. One of them missed the ride back, but was lucky enuf to get picked up by an officer who brought him back here. I understand there was a battle royal at the dance, and it may be that the sgts. all claim that they were dead drunk in order not to be questioned about the brawl. I don't believe that any of my men were involved in it, they aren't the type, and secondly, none of them show any marks of any fighting. It's a good thing that I went into town yesterday because the officers club is closed for the next three days and it is the only excuse we have for leaving the area, so that we will have to remain here unless officers are given passes, which is a rare thing in this battalion of ours. It will be mighty monotonous just hanging around here, but maybe I'll catch up on some of the reading which I should be doing. As it is, I barely find time to write your daily letters.

I got a few more gray hairs this morning. I received word that the colonel wanted to see me the first thing this morning. That always upsets me because he never wants to see me for anything good, it's always something that he wants to raise hell about. I thought and thought to see if I could remember anything in which I might have snafued, but couldn't think of it. When I arrived at HQ I found the colonel and he immediately let me know that a general had caught one of my men with a desk on his truck, and when he stopped the man to ask him what he was doing with the piece of furniture he was told that one of the captains had told the man to get it and bring it to the company. I immediately realized that Van must have been on another of his scavenger hunts, but didn't say anything to the colonel about who it might be. An order had come down several weeks ago forbidding us from bringing any of this extra furniture into our area (right now I'm typing on a forbidden table which was here long before the order came out), and I told all the officers and men about it. I told the colonel I'd investigate it and let him know who the officer was. Then he asked me what John was doing in town 2 days ago. I told him about the 3 days a week arrangement with our combat team to let us go to the officers club. He thought that the club had been closed, but I was sure that this was not the case and told him so. I investigated this when I returned to the area and found that last nite was the last nite of it, so we were safe on that score. I questioned the driver of

the vehicle that had been stopped by the general and found that he had been told to get the stuff by Van. In fact Van was along with him to pick up the stuff. I next talked to Van and learned that he had wanted a bread box for the kitchen which we have been fixing up very nicely, so he went down on a search for it, and at the same time got a load of gravel with which to improve the floor in the kitchen. On the way back, instead of coming right on back, he decided that he would like to take a swim, and he was at the beach at the time the general, who was also coming to take a swim, saw the vehicle. Actually he didn't belong on that beach, since our beach is several miles from that one, but you can never guess what Van is going to do. It depends on what idea strikes him. At any rate I called the colonel and told him of the incident, explaining that Van claimed he knew nothing about the order which had come down. However, I know that I had told him about it, altho I didn't tell the colonel this. The colonel said that he would decide on what action to take and would let me know. Leip and John had planned to go into town to-day but I investigated on the officer's club business and learned that it had closed last nite, so they didn't get to go to town. I am a bit upset by this closing because Yasha Heifitz is due to be there to-day and tomorrow and I had planned on going to the concert. Maybe he'll come out and play for us, here in the field.

This is the fly and malaria season out here, and we have been pestered by both flies and mosquitoes. Fortunately we have had only two cases of malaria in the company, and one of those is back on duty again. I think that we'll be able to keep it to a minimum if we follow all the suggested precautions. To get rid of the flies, and thus help clear up the diarrhea situation we have screened in our kitchen with mosquito netting, and it has really done a fine job. I'm hoping that the diarrheas will clear up now. It hasn't been as bad as it had been, because of our intensive watchfulness over our mess gear cleanliness. We are also building a nice ice box and expect to get ice daily from town. If they leave us here long enuf we'll have a place that is as good as many of the camps back in the states.

Mail deliveries have been quite good for all of us, and John and Leip received some nice pictures of their kids. Leips two girls are quite chubby devils with very curly red hair. The younger one, just a bit younger than Judy, is quite cute and very vivacious on her pictures, while the older one is fat, and altho pretty, has an old woman's face because of her obesity. John has a swell series of pictures of his son - about 18 pictures in one folder. Some of them are really cute. Drady received a picture of his wife and daughter, which he had enlarged. I had planned on having one of the kids and you enlarged and send it home to surprise you (the same size as that big picture I sent you of me) but at \$6.00 per picture I decided that I would spend the money for something else.

That's about all for now. I want to get cleaned up so that I can go into services in town. No - I'm not getting religious, but it might be an interesting experience, and after all I want to make life as interesting as possible if I'm going to have to be away from you.

8 July 4:30 PM

I'm glad that I held this letter over for a day because now I'll be able to get all of the story about the desk situation in the one letter. After getting cleaned up and eating early chow I loaded up the Jewish boys in the company (Leip didn't want to go) and we went to battalion HQ where we were to get the vehicle to go into town. All told there were twenty men who were going. We were just ready to leave when my mail clerk handed me an envelope addressed to me from the battalion. I didn't think anything of it, because this is a very common incident, but opened it and read it. I was stunned to find out that it was an official reprimand to me from the colonel for the incident involving Van. He stated in it - better yet, let me give it to you verbatim (I'll include one for you, sweets - a duplicate of the original.) Following the usual official heading came this:

1. An enlisted man of your command was stopped when found driving a vehicle containing a mahogany table. When apprehended he professed ignorance of any wrong doing and said that a Captain under your command had directed him to a building in ---- for the purpose of removing said table and appropriating it for company use.
2. This is a direct violation of *****
3. Failure to comply with the orders was not the fault of the Officer or Enlisted man concerned but can be traced directly to the company Commander for failure to acquaint all the personnel under his command with the provisions of these orders.
4. A copy of this reprimand will be placed in your 201 File.

XXXX

Gosh! I was fit to be tied. I felt that it was persecution in its most obvious and elementary form. Since I was all ready to leave and the colonel was not around, I told his master sergeant that he needn't bother putting it in my 201 file yet because I would have Van down to talk to the colonel. I was furious all the way into town, but forgot my indignation on arrival at the synagogue. I'll finish this entire story first before I tell you about any other

of my experiences. On my return from town I had to go into the battalion CP to call up for a vehicle to come and get us, and the colonel was sitting there. I told him that I had been surprised to receive the letter from him since I had told him in the morning that I had informed all the officers and men in the company about it, and apparently absent minded Van had forgotten. He said that it was the only thing he could do since I had told him that Van claimed he did not remember being told. I told him that I would have Van down in the morning and let him tell his own story. I then asked him whether there were any different rules for my company than for any other company in the battalion. He said No and wanted to know why I asked. I then told him that my men always went into town with their ties on, as the division directed, but that in the group from headquarters that went into town with us, not a single man wore a tie. He suggested that I might have corrected the men, and I told him that it would not have corrected the error at its source. He then suggested that I should have told their company commander, but admitted immediately at my statement that this would only cause antagonism that I was correct. He suggested that I report these deviations from regulations to him, but I told him that I wasn't going to be anybody's stool pigeon. I told him that I had been leaning over backwards to see that everything went OK in the company, and that at the present time I am the most severe disciplinarian in the battalion. He ~~sh~~ nodded with that vacant smile on his face, agreeing but having no comment to make. I realized that there was no point in starting an argument, and up to this time it was merely a discussion, so I let it go at that.

This morning I showed Van the letter, more or less expecting him to make the suggestion that he go to the colonel and correct the notion, but nothing was forthcoming. The last nite I had spoken to ~~John~~ and Drady and they both remembered discussing the item at the dinner table. I then told Van that if he remembered me talking about it that he might go to the colonel and tell him, but that if he didn't I was willing to take the rap. Van felt that it was chiefly his fault and so he went with me to see the colonel. They talked without me being present, and when the talk was over the colonel came out to me and told me that Van felt that it was more his fault than mine. I then told the colonel that I would appreciate it if he would send me a letter to the effect that the reprimand has been remanded. He promised to do so. Believe me my sweet, in a situation of this type I want that in black and white.

Gosh, it will be a happy day for me when this war is over, or when the changes which I have been hoping for do occur; and I really think that they will.

That trip to the synagogue I'll save for a different letter.

Chow at noon was not good, i.e. the main courses, so I filled up on some salad and tomatoes which the boys had bought (We collected 25¢ from each man in order to create a slush fund with which to buy vegetables, ice, and ice cream - more about that later) and had some delicious ice cold lemonade. This afternoon we played a game of ball against Renzi's company on which the boys had bet \$675. Since it was played at 1 PM because we had another game at 4, I kept all of the men except the ball players at class, despite the fact that Renzi brought up his whole company. I stick so damned close to the straight and narrow line that it isn't funny and works a hardship on both my men and myself. When the class was over we all traipsed over to the game to find our men behind 2 - 0. Our boys immediately started talking it up and we tied the score that inning and went on to win 3 - 2. Believe me that was plenty exciting. We played two games yesterday - 1 a league game and the other a side game for money, and won both of them. If this keeps up I'm going to be tempted to bet on my boys every time they play. Actually it would be an excellent investment, but I've always made it a policy not to bet, and I guess I won't change. Drady won 84 dollars on the game and quite a few of the men won \$50 each. This company is a good investment.

Well, that's off my chest. So far it's even stephen in this little war of politics. Of course I'm the underdog, and I'll probably get it in the end, but that will be OK because then all my worries will be over, and I will have quite a simple little job compared to what I have now. If Ben thinks he's mixed up in politics, he has no idea what pressure politics is.

I'll write another letter later in the evening. All my love, darling, don't worry about the situation because after all there really isn't very much that they can do other than hurt my feelings, and I guess that will wear off, too, after a while.

Walt.