

Good Morning, darling:

16 July 1944, Sunday 10:30 AM

As I write on this sultry Sunday morning, I hear the strains of the field organ and the horrible voice of our chaplain singing in the distance. If it were any closer, I'm afraid I would have to move. I'm afraid that both the appearance of our chaplain and the contents of his speeches lead toward a feeling of ludicrousness rather than awesomeness.

I had planned writing you my usual afternoon letter yesterday, but I became engrossed in reading "Hotel Berlin" by Vicki Baum, not bad (on the order of her Grand Hotel) and then I was inveigled into playing a volleyball game (I'm improving) so that it was dark before I had the opportunity to start writing. I therefore decided to wait until this morning. So therefore this letter will consist mostly of what happened Friday.

As I mentioned before, this is the season in Italy for malaria and intestinal diseases, particularly diarrheas. I had been bragging about the fact that I had not developed the GIs (as the latter is called because of the frequency of its occurrence in the army) but they have finally caught up with me. Fortunately it hasn't been too bad, and at first I did nothing about treating it, but it got a bit worse last nite so that I knocked myself out with an ounce of paregoric and took 30 gr. of bismuth. It looks like that is going to keep it pretty well under control. In association with this same subject arose another one of Van's irritating stunts. As you know, he is like Ben in being no respecter of other peoples property; he'll take something of yours, break it, and then be ever so apologetic about it and feel that settles the subject. This time it was a roll of toilet tissue which I had been carrying around with me for a considerable period of time. I always make it a policy to have a roll in my possession because quite frequently the company runs out of paper and doesn't have any issued for a few days, and being a delicate individual I don't like to wipe with the stars and stripes. Well, the company did run out of it and Van found mine lying on my bed, so he proceeded to donate it to the company. Very considerably he pulled off a few sheets of it for me and the other officers. However, a few sheets doesn't go anywhere with the GIs. I complained a bit and he turned over some paper which he had saved for himself. I liked that, he gives my paper away but retained his own. Fortunately we have gotten in a fresh stock and now I've protected myself for the time being.

Things have been very monotonous around here and we are all more or less eager to move out of here and get back into combat to overcome our ennui. That may sound a bit foolhardy, and possibly it is, but there is nothing more boring than sitting around all day long doing about the same thing day after day. It has had one good effect, though, and that is to make many of the men who had never given a thought to world politics and the tactics of the war, become aware of these facts and even enter discussions on them. Maybe this war will make some of the men do some thinking after all. I wonder.

You may remember sending me a news article concerning a German General's analysis of the fighting in Italy. I was greatly amused with this because it was dated 1 July and we had received a very secret document later than this on the very same subject (after it had been printed in the states). Of course, our secret document was far more complete than the newspaper article and it really would have done your heart good to read it. It was the greatest morale builder of any documents which we have received anent ~~the~~ the campaign thru which we went. I'm sorry that is all that I can say about it.

I am enclosing a clipping from the Stars and Stripes about an army officer who baked to death in his car in a temperature of 130 in the California desert. This started a discussion among the old men about some of our experiences in the desert and this helped kill most of the afternoon. There is no need of repeating the reminiscence because you know most of it. It also brought up the question as to how many of our present company went thru maneuvers with the battalion, and I was surprised to find that it is less than half of the company. I am the only officer in our company who saw La. maneuvers, despite the fact that Leip has been in the army one day longer than I.

Do you remember Handlebar Hank Keeling, the young officer with the handlebar mustache whom we noticed at the officers dance at Ft. Dix? He is the one whose mustache was shaved off on the last nite we were on the boat. Well, Hank is a captain, the company commander of one of the battalion HQ companies in our combat team. He is a peculiar man who is very outspoken, but nobody's fool. Because of his outspokenness he has made many enemies, despite his capabilities. Among these enemies is his battalion commander, a Lt. Col. The latter decided to get rid of Keeling and instituted reclassification proceedings. However, Hank outsmarted him, going around and getting recommendations from almost all of the other officers so that they would never have been able to make the charges stand. The proceedings were consequently dropped, but Hank insisted that he wanted them to be carried on. He even went to the colonel in charge of the combat team to try to be courtmartialed in order to clear up the blot on his record (he is a regular army man) but the whole business was finally dropped without any complaint against Hank, and he was put in charge of another company in order to get him away from the Bn commander who doesn't like him.

You will remember that I told you that Maj. Mike had tried to get out of his job as a regimental surgeon and get sent back to a hospital as a doc. Apparently this didn't go thru but it looks like he has worked something different. I knew that he would find something wrong rather than go up to the front again as regimental surgeon, because he felt that he had had too many narrow escapes and didn't want to flaunt fate too much. He had somewhat prepared the way for getting sent back by having severe gall bladder attacks requiring morphine for relief, but continuing to work despite the pain. This occurred several times during the push. Well, the other day a herniorrhaphy which he had had done some time ago broke loose, and the last we heard of him he is far away from us at one of the general hospitals. It looks like that will get him out of things for good. I understand that if his absence is permanent, and I feel that it will be, that Capt. Kirby will become regimental surgeon. This amuses us very much because Kirby, altho a good garrison officer, has been pretty worthless in the field, despite the fact that he received a bronze medal for heroism. I believe I told you about the incident where he and the other medical officer in his aid station ducked out on their men when the going got tough, and stayed with another aid station while their men had to take care of the wounded without the aid of a medical officer. Their men really had it in for them that time. To hear that Kirby was awarded the bronze star for heroism was a huge joke to all of us. In fact, many of us have decided that this business of giving medals is something to be taken with a grain of salt in very many cases. I avoided any unfairness in my company by waiting until I had overwhelming evidence in favor of a recommendation of an award before I did any recommending, and the men who had been right up in the front lines and had seen the acts were the ones who gave the suggestions for the recommendations. If we don't get a medal in each case recommended, I will lose all my faith in medals completely.

Getting back to food, (you can't keep away from that subject when there is nothing much happening in the area because it is one of the most important topics of conversation around an army installation at any time) we made some mustard from the powdered mustard which we received from either Chip or Irv. The boys added starch, vinegar, butter, and goodness knows what else, according to an army recipe, and ended up with a preparation which looked exactly like mayonnaise but tasted very much like horseradish. Everyone enjoyed it, and it really was appreciated. I don't believe I told you about the deer in the last area in which we were bivouacked. Altho I didn't see any, a number of our men did, and some of the infantrymen, tired of C rations, decided to go out and get some fresh meat. This they did, and skinned the deer which they killed and fed their company on it. I decided against this for our company because I know what fresh-killed meat tastes like, and felt that since we had no means of aging it properly, that the meat would go to waste, and secondly I was sure that the entire situation was highly irregular, so we had no deer meat. I imagine my boys are getting pretty tired with my sticking to the letter on all rules. We were supposed to have doughnuts for Friday night, but for some reason or other it didn't work out, and regimental headquarters got them, despite the fact that we were on the schedule for them. Now the doughnut machine has broken down, so we figure that we are out of any chance of receiving doughnuts for the time being. I think of it, I would like you to send me the desert water bag which I left home. With these hot sultry days here, it will really come in handy. I'd appreciate your sending it as soon as practicable since it will take about 2 months in coming over and by that time the hot weather will probably be on the wane. At present I'm keeping my water cool by wrapping a wet sock around my canteen and it is working very well.

I am enclosing a newspaper clipping regarding the troubles an Italian teacher is having in teaching an Anglo class English as it is spoken by GIs. Some of the pet sayings will probably give you some trouble, so I'll elaborate a bit. "Blow it out your barracks bag" more commonly, blow it out your A** (synonym - a beast of burden), is a retort made to someone who complains about something about which nothing can be done.

T.S. See the chaplain - Tough S**, see the chaplain, has about the same connotation.

The unmentioned four letter word, sounding like the word sheet which the teacher defined, is self explanatory.

Oh my tired back, is a most gentlemanly way of saying a much cruder adjective that the GIs use. The expression is used whenever something doesn't go to the GIs liking.

The article, all in all, is quite amusing. I'll have to remember to write down some of the pet phrases which the boys in the company use.

Well, my sweet, its chow time and also time to get this letter in to the mail clerk if I want to get it off. I send all my love, and all my thoughts

Walt.

Italian Students Learn English From GIs And Stump Teacher

By Pvt. EDMUND F. HOGAN
Stars and Stripes Staff Writer

ROME, July 12 — Miss Yole DeBoni screwed up her eyebrows and admitted quite frankly that she was nettled. Miss DeBoni teaches English to a class of 11 in a Rome language school and lately her boys and girls have been giving out with a strange patois that sounds little like the homework she assigns.

From the start of the class last Dec. 15 to the first week in June, the students were "on the ball," Miss DeBoni implied. Since then, she sighed, things haven't been quite the same.

The class was seated along the rim of a rectangular table. One of the pretty 18-year-old twin signorinas at the far end coyly revealed she'd had a couple of dates with American soldiers. And would Miss DeBoni please explain what the GI boy friend meant when he told the horn-happy driver to "blow it out your barracks bag." Miss DeBoni ruffled the pages of her Italian-American dictionary. She was sorry, she said, but the reference book didn't list the idiom.

A 25-year-old Roman had been

with two GIs on a tour of historic sites. He remembered one had suggested to his buddy, "That's T. S. See the chaplain." Would Miss DeBoni please interpret? Miss DeBoni wasn't sure what the "T. S." implied, although she thought it meant something like "that's too bad." As for the chaplain, that was very good indeed. The chaplain, she informed the pupils, is a clergyman and he gives spiritual assistance and guidance to the troops. Seeing the chaplain, Miss DeBoni added, proved beyond doubt that U. S. soldiers have excellent morals.

The lesson for the day included reading from an English-language paper. The pupils had copies of Union Jack. Miss DeBoni explained that they had read Stars and Stripes for a time after the Allied entry into Rome, but she had to switch because Stars and Stripes is written in "American slang."

A boy from Nettuno, the proud possessor of a cigarette lighter a GI had given him, ended The Stars and Stripes vs Union Jack

discussion by asking a question. In answer Miss DeBoni hastily picked up a pad in front of her. "It's a section of paper, like this one," she said, pointing to the square of white. "Or it can be a covering on the bed." Rising, she turned to the blackboard and spelled the word out in very large letters.

The boy was pleased. But he didn't know what the GI was driving at when he exploded, "My tired back."

That was a new one on Miss DeBoni but she guessed it meant the GI was weary and his back hurt. Miss DeBoni's head had begun to hurt, too.

But the class had been studying cities in the U. S. and knew about New York. "New York," chirped the striking brunette in white, "is the port for Brooklyn."

Miss DeBoni's headache was growing larger. "It's just the other way around," she informed the brunette gently.

The bell rang. Miss DeBoni made a beeline for her office and possibly for aspirin.

Bakes To Death In Auto 'Oven'

KINGMAN, Ariz., July 12—Capt. Howard Brady, 37, Kingman Army Air Field supply officer, literally baked to death because he failed to realize that 130-degree heat was converting his auto into a mobile oven as he drove along a lonely desert trail, medical officers declared yesterday.

Doctors said the 180-pound officer had lost 60 pounds during the four hours he spent on the desert. The intense heat apparently evaporated the moisture of his body as he drove through the desert without his being aware of it until he was thoroughly dehydrated and lost consciousness.

an army officer who baked to death. This started a discussion and this helped kill most of the cause you know most of it. It is a very serious matter with the army. I am the only one of the company. I am the only one that has been in the army with the handlebar mustache whom those mustache was shaved off on the company commander of one of the men who is very outspoken, but no one, despite his capabilities, was decided to get rid of him. The latter decided to get rid of him. However, Hank outsmarted him, going around and getting recommendations from almost all of the other officers so that they would never have been able to make the charges stand. The proceedings were consequently dropped, but Hank in fact tried to be court-martialed in order to clear up the blot on his record (he is a regular army man) but the whole business was finally dropped without any complaint against Hank and he was put in charge of another company in order to get him away from the 3d commander who doesn't like him.