

Good evening, my dearling:

17 July 1944 7:30 PM -

I'm sitting in the midst of a beautiful wooded area next to a truck garden in the heart of Italy's many mountains. Except for the insects about, this is an ideal spot, & I can take care of the insects by getting inside my mosquito bar which is nicely stretched between two of the many trees, directly over my cot. I should sleep well tonight, particularly in view of the fact that I had none last night. My clothes almost make me look like a snow man, they are so dusty, but I did take the time to wash my hands & face. The tan of my exposed skin gives quite a contrast with the white-powdery dust on my clothing.

Excuse the incoherence of thought - I am being interrupted repeatedly by my new 1st Sgt - there's a tale there, my lady.

Last night all of the officers in my company attended the party at Battalion HQ given by Paul Stroggi & John Nurnberger in honor of their receipt of their captaincies, & by Eliscu & Vitagliano for their promotions to 2nd Lt's. It was obviously going to be a drinking party from the start. Paul had gotten some bourbon whiskey & ice, & he had some coca cola syrup & a CO₂ cartridge to fizz it up so that it ended up as a pretty nice highball. Everyone tried one, even Van, & I subsequently tried a second one, without undue effect. It was surprising to see that two drinks seemed to be enough to start the gang harmonizing & they continued for the rest of the evening, still going strong at the time I left. Paul very wisely got them drunk on the good whiskey & then shifted over to straight alcohol - by that time they didn't care what they were drinking. That straight alcohol mixed into a highball with synthetic lemon juice, ice, & water is a concoction that will burn the lining out of any one's stomach. I tasted it, merely to satisfy my curiosity, & believe me one taste was enough.

I spent most of the evening outside the tent talking to Vince Rengi & later to Bill Booher & Maj. Campbell - none of whom are true drinkers, but more like myself - tend to be satisfied with one or two drinks. I was kidding Vince, offering to trade him my first Sgt. for one of his new ones (he received a new 1st Sgt. from a replacement pool some time ago & is now encumbered with two first Sgts). He replied that he'd give me both his 1st Sgts for just one private from

my company, but not my first sgt. I suggested that I might be able to make my 1st sgt a private + we both laughed + forgot the matter.

It was interesting to note that Bill Booher + Maj. Campbell spent their time outside the tent, not mingling with the true drinkers. This is a very significant reaction, my sweet, and I'll tell you more about that later in the ~~letter~~ ^{letter}. The officers of Co C, none of them being true drinkers, all left at about 10:30 with the party ~~growing~~ stronger + louder by the minute. ~~Sal~~ really was putting on a show for them at the time I left, singing loudly in his unpleasant nasal twang, and dancing in a vulgar fashion. I figured that that was as good a time as any to make my get away. I learned this morning that the party broke up at midnight + that they spent much of their time pulling drunks out of a ditch which ran by the tent.

On arriving in the area I went to bed + read until midnight. At 12:30 I was awakened by a message telling me to be prepared to move in the morning. At 1 I was again called to have ~~one of~~ ^{one of} the officers go on a billeting party - you probably remember my telling you about billeting + quartering parties during my La. maneuvers experience with a collecting company. It consists of going out with a group of officers + men, all with the same purpose in mind - finding a suitable spot for the company which they individually represent - + then meeting the company on its arrival + directing it to the area selected. Since there was still no information as to when I was to move I decided to stay up rather than fall asleep + be awakened every few minutes. I spent the time profitably, finishing a letter to you, making phone calls, etc.

At about this time (2:30 AM) Sgt. Hall came in greatly perturbed. He was accompanied by 3 of my men. It seems that 2 of these men were on guard while the third was sgt. of the guard. Sgt. Hall had gone out to find the guard to run an errand for him + couldn't find him so he investigated + found that he was asleep. I questioned the man who went off duty at 2 + learned that he had awakened the other man + given him the watch by which they are able to keep proper time. However he did not make sure that the guard replacing him got out of bed + the latter fell asleep again while the former

went to bed. Now sleeping on guard is a very serious charge - one of the few for which death can be meted out in the army. Obviously this was an unfortunate incident & I didn't intend to make anything serious out of it. The important thing was to keep it from happening again. This I explained to Sgt. Hall & he was furious. He told me that he was going to tell me the rest of the story when he was interrupted. Since I had been the one who "interrupted" him, actually I didn't, this irritated me. He then told me that after he had awakened the boy who was to be on guard @ he gave him hell & the lad talked back to him & told him he wasn't afraid of him. Maybe I was biased against the sgt. but I took the attitude that you can't start raising Cain with a person right after you awaken him & not expect some sort of retort. I didn't say this until I had scolded the boy for talking back to a non-com & had sent him out on his guard duty. I then lit into the sgt. with both feet, telling him I didn't like his snippy attitude (I had previously warned him about it) & he as much as said "Let's see you do something about it." I let the subject drop at that determined that I would leave him behind when we moved. I still waited in the CP for word about our move. Finally word came down that we were to wake the company in time to eat breakfast at 4 AM. I knew that it was way too early, as far as my company was concerned, because we are always the last to move. However, since no word had come down as to what time we actually were going to move, I decided that I'd better follow orders. But at 3:25 word came down as to what time our company would move, so I then knew that we had plenty of time & didn't wake the company until 5, instead of 3:30.

I was up at 6 & after breakfast went to Bn HQ & talked over some business with the colonel, including the first sgt. problem. It was during this "conference" that the colonel told me he was leaving the battalion. Of course I acted as tho I was very sorry to see him go, but he couldn't hear my heart singing. He then told me that he was getting a promotion to colonel & going to Corps. There is no question but that the army takes care of its own. I wonder if he would have gotten picked upstairs if he wasn't regular army. Needless to say this is the

change which I prophesized & which I prayed for. It's almost a certainty that Maj. Campbell will take over & be promoted to Lt. Col. There is no question in my mind but that things should run smoothly hereafter & we should have a much better medical battalion.

When I returned to the area after my talk with the colonel I informed the 1st Sgt. that he was to stay behind when the company left. He asked me if that meant that he would be transferred & I told him that I assumed it did. He said "Good." I didn't tell him that I was going to demote him to a private - or rather recommend his demotion - because a court has to judge the case to determine demotion of the higher non com ranks. I'm sure all the officers in the company will back me on the charges.

I have appointed Sgt. Macris, the swell liaison Sgt. with my company, to be acting 1st Sgt. & I'm sure he will do a good job because he is very intelligent (Hall wasn't) & is well liked by the men. I've appointed Ruth (PFC) to take over Macris's job in liaison - He isn't sure he can do it, but he did a swell job in combat & I feel that he'll be able to get by very nicely, especially since John is along with him most of the time.

Censorship in the army is a crazy thing. We have been permitted to tell all about our visits to Rome, only not being permitted to give the dates of visits; & had been allowed to send all the postcards that we wished - as Judy & Lanie can attest. However, an order came down yesterday, stating that we can no longer send postcards with views of Italy. As a result I am stuck with a large number of postcards of Rome. I'm not perturbed about that for I shall continue to write notes on them & hold them until we are allowed to send them again. I had hoped to send one to each of the kids daily so they wouldn't think I had forgotten them, but I guess it will have to wait.

I'm going to have to close this letter & start another one. This will probably be too heavy as it is.

All my love, darling. Things look as tho they should clear up for me in every way in the battalion & I'm pleased no end.
Walt.