

good morning, my sweet:

21 July 930 A.M., Friday

Our typewriter seems on the fritz so I'm reverting to the pen again. I hope that you don't have trouble reading my handwriting. I can't understand why the typewriter should have broken since, when I used it yesterday it was working quite well, but the next person who used it found that the carriage swung all the way to the left so that it was impossible to type. A check showed that a small spring which controlled the gear for individual spacing of letters had broken & will have to be replaced. We have taken it to an ordnance outfit down the road from us, & altho they don't usually work on typewriters they plan to see if they can fix it to-day. Those ordnance fellows are very capable mechanics & can fix most any thing so I imagine they will have no trouble. The business of fixing typewriters seems to be quite a specialty in the army. They have one man in quartermaster who does nothing but repair typewriters day in & day out. However, this man happens to be in the army hospital at the present time, so ordnance is willing to undertake the attempt at repairing it.

I'm not sure whether I told you that I returned the June letters Wednesday only to receive a couple of more June letters Wed. evening, after having mailed the packet. I can't begin to tell you how much pleasure I get in the rereading of your letters in their proper sequence. They give me an overall picture of just what is going on at home, & needless to say that is what is foremost in my mind. I am so appreciative of the time you take out of your busy days to write to me. Keep it up. Letters from home are more important than food.

The boys in the company, since time hangs so heavy on their hands, have taken to making whistles from grass & bamboo in the area. As a result there is all sorts of noises to be heard in the area. I add to this occasionally by blowing on an ocarina which we received from special service some time ago. No one in the company seemed interested, so I have taken it for myself & when the whim strikes me, especially while riding in the jeep when I don't disturb any one, I blow away at it trying to extract a tune. I'm afraid I'm not much of a musician but have improved slightly since starting to mess around with it. One of the boys in the company, Matusik, about whom I'll tell you a bit later, has a harmonica & is quite good with it. He loves to play Polish songs & it is a pleasure to hear a bit of music in the area. Our musicians are not limited to Matusik. In our company we have a drummer who played with a professional band - (Doty), & two boys who sang with bands - Rowsey, who has a sweet Irish tenor, & Lohse - a tremendous hulk of a man whom I have never heard sing. One of the most popular of songs over here is one of German origin. I first heard it sung & played at the Hotel Esplanade in Rome at the time that I stayed there. The girl who sang it had a very sweet voice & knew how to use it to good advantage, & the song has a lilting tune which tends to stick in your mind & make you hum or whistle it. I read a write up in Time about the song - Lily Marlene - and the article further suggested that this will probably be one of the songs which, like "Madelon" of the last war, will be symbolic of this war. It is fully as catchy as Madelon.

Yesterday, while sitting in the CP typing, I heard some of the boys talking. Willie Kolarik (Homer Louis, etc.) was talking about his meeting an English soldier while at the rest center, where he was for a four day period. At the very first meal the Englishman noted that sugar & cream were available for coffee. He looked with amazement at it & said, "Humm! Sugar & Cream! To hell with the king! Give me a president every time."

During the same period, while I was typing, Forkin, one of the new men who joined us just before the start of the push, a jitterbug comedian from New York whose favorite adjective, even in his letters, is a word which sounds very similar to his name, passed by the tent with this remark, "They must be rationing ink in N.Y. I haven't had a f----- letter in a month."

I wish I could get down in writing all this GI humor, but I'm afraid that I can't because of several reasons. Most important is the fact that as the CO I cramp the boys' style & they don't feel free to express themselves naturally when I am around. This is true with all of the officers. It is that indefinable reserve which the army develops between Officer & enlisted men. As a result it is the enlisted men who have most of the fun in the army.

Leip has Swede Anderson, comedian, agitator, & company carpenter, fixing him a latrine box for his personal use. It seems that Leip has difficulty using a slit trench - his legs simply won't hold up long enough for him to finish comfortably. This is an extremely uncomfortable sensation which, thank goodness, I only experience when one side of the latrine is higher than the other & as a result all of my weight rests on one leg. Col. Smith (remember him?), who is now in the Pacific Theater with his colored boys, used to suffer as Leip does & sometimes would be so weak in the legs by the time he had finished that he would have to be pulled up by someone. We have been thinking of building a latrine box in such a manner that it can be taken apart and thus we will have it wherever we go. The difficulty with this is twofold - at present we have no lumber, and secondly, it must be carefully constructed - i.e. deeply enough so that men who develop the G.I. (diarrhea) don't splatter the back board with their excreta, which comes out with tremendous force in those cases.

Wednesday, with a threat of rain developing, Leip, John, & Vince Drach, had the boys put up a wall tent (opens at each end). I got out my shelter half & tossed it across the top of my mosquito bar intending to drop it along the sides of it if it should start raining. I also placed all my paraphernalia which could be harmed by the rain underneath my cot & dropped the canvas of my bedding roll down over the sides of the cot so that I was set for anything but a downpour. I could picture myself bagging my belongings there a heavy downpour & putting them in the tent, but fortunately it didn't rain more than a few drops. The tent which the officers put up is a sweat box, with the sun beating down strongly on it all day long, & the flies & insects in it don't give you a minutes peace, so I am well content to stay where I am in the little woods.

There has always been a complaint by the men in the litter bearer squad that the motor pool men are a bunch of prima donnas in that they never have to attend classes or hikes when we are in a rest area. I mentioned this to the motor sergeant & he claimed that his men were busy working on their vehicles all day long. I knew better than this because they simply can't find enough work to do on a vehicle to keep them busy 8 hours a day, day after day. I kept a check on them & found that they usually spend the afternoon sleeping or writing letters. It is a bad morale factor for the litter bearers to return from a two hour hike in the hot Italian sun to find members of their own company asleep in the shade, so I ordered the boys in the motor pool who were not on duty with their ambulances (usually in bivouac areas we have only 2 ambulances on duty per day) to attend all classes & hikes in the afternoon & do their motor maintenance in the morning. Since we have come to our new area & are not holding classes, I find that the motor pool is able to do its maintenance work in 1 hour. Will they complain when I make them go to classes from 10 AM on!

I have been keeping up with my laundry by doing a bit of it each day - washing colored garments one day & white ones the next. The business of washing the shirt & trousers is quite

undertaking. It requires a nice sized board, a scrubbing brush with very hard bristles, G.I. soap, & elbow grease. We spread the garment out on the board after first soaking it in water, rub the G.I. soap into it & on the brush, & then scrub away for all we are worth. It turns out pretty clean after repeated rinses. After wringing it out it is hung up to dry. In my shady spot this takes 2 days for wooden O.O's. Obviously, the finished product is as wrinkled as it can possibly be. To overcome this & get an appearance of having been ironed, the O.O's are placed in the bedding roll, carefully stretched out so that creases will be where desired, & then covered by all the bedding on which one sleeps. It is surprising to see how well the finished product, which is carried right where it was placed in the bedding roll until used, looks when taken out - even tho the bedding roll may have been rolled up & opened up repeatedly in the interim. We don't attempt to take the wrinkles out of any of the other clothes.

Yesterday I decided to start Studs Lonigan for the second time. I believe I last read it, or at least started it, in the desert. I don't know why I didn't continue it at that time because I find it very interesting & absorbing at the present time. In fact I started out in the afternoon reading it while I took a sun bath (I'm as dark as I was in the desert) & became so absorbed in it that I didn't want to put it down long enough to take a bath & wash my sweating body - but being a basically clean person, Van's impression notwithstanding, I prevailed upon myself to perform this necessary act. I continued reading all thru the evening, ignoring the volley ball game which I really should have joined since I have no exercise whatever these days, and with only 1 or two interruptions read until 11:30 to finish the first book of the Trilogy (more than 200 pages). I expect to continue with it all day to-day & keep it up until I have finished the book of more than 1000 pages. Actually, it isn't the ideal book to read under the present circumstances because of the prominent part which sex plays in it & the frankness with which the author, Jas. T. Farrell, deals with it. It is a bad business to increase those latent sexual desires after so many months away from home & there are a considerable number of men in the company ^{for whom} I would consider it inadvisable reading material. However, my longing for you has always been strong, altho kept very well under control, & altho it is intensified in the reading of the book, I find that I am able to bear it with equanimity.

The boys who got the corn for me Wednesday were around yesterday to get my permission to see the same farmer about getting figs. I gave that permission & they were soon back with a helmet full of figs of a type which I had never previously seen. These were fully ripe and were of a very dark red color. Their taste was much sweeter than any raw figs which I had previously eaten & they were so rich that I could only eat two of them. This Italy is really a productive country.

When we moved up to our new area, not knowing where we were going or what we were in for, we left our athletic equipment back with battalion, since we can't carry any unnecessary equipment because of the tamen dues load which we normally have to carry with us. Seeing how little there was to do around here & how monotonous things were getting, I sent a vehicle back to battalion to pick up the volley ball & net, which don't take up much space. It was quite a welcome surprise to the boys ⁱⁿ two respects - the volley ball & net gave them something to occupy their evenings after the heat of the sun had waned, and also the boys who went after the net brought back mail also. Mail call is just as thrilling an event now as it ever was. There is no monotony to that.

I received 4 letters - 2 air mails from you - July 6 & 9 & 2 from Sophy - July 5 & 12. For some unearthly reason I've included a number of air mail stamps. I wonder if he thought that this would induce

me to write more family letters. It wasn't until I could buy over here. I have discontinued family letters for the time being because there isn't anything really interesting happening here & any how the more interesting aspects of mine make the rounds. If & when I return to the front lines I may start up the weekly family letter. As it is, none of them write to me unless something unusual happens or I report them in one of my letters by telling them about the political situation, or if they receive a large batch of letters that I could might type up.

My radio has been acting most peculiarly. After having worked for 2 days it suddenly seemed to stop & I sent it up to the radio mechanic of the regiment. However, on the way up there it started working again so the driver returned it. It again stopped the next day & again was taken up only to avoid being worked on because the radio man was not present. As if to prevent any work being done on it it really started working very well & last night we had quite a session with it. I was in the CP reading Studio Longan & Sgt. Meier was looking around with the radio trying to get Solly, the British from Berlin. She is supposed to give quite a good program in excellent Americanese including all slang, & some fine jazz program. So far I have never heard her & again last night I was disturbed not to hear her. However, we did hear some fine records of some American bands & as if by magic the CP tent filled with men from the company who were interested in this type of music. There consisted almost solely of the newer men who had joined the company recently. That was easily understood because most of these are of post high school age. They could recognize the band as soon as the first notes were played & at that absorbed in the memories created by the music, discussing their favorite bands in between records. Announcements of the next record were made by a man with a pronounced German accent & the boys were conversed with laughter each time he announced such numbers as "You don't you fall in love with me etc. However they would rather listen to their favorites as opposed to classical music which is common daily fare on these European stations. I'm afraid that I'm no expert since I find myself listening to the radio when classical programs are broadcast whereas I can concentrate on my reading while the swing bands away. I was so impressed by the fellow's desire to hear music from home that I am leaving the radio in the station for their use.

I finally received the letter from the colonel regarding the removal of the regiment. I was afraid he would leave our unit without doing anything about it, but if he had I would have followed him with official correspondence no matter where he went. He probably realized this & didn't want a letter of that type following him thru channels.

Last night again, the bug heard of a place where they could buy wine, so I decided I'd go to investigate just to get a look around the vicinity. The place to which we went was a wine factory nearby from our area as it sits on the side of a hill across from us. It didn't look far away, but as usual in mountainous country, was much farther away than it seemed. When we arrived, after a beautifully scenic trip, we were told that they had moving since the Germans had pulled out the hump from all the keep when they left, allowing the wine to run out on the floor. I was curious as to what the place looked like so I accepted their invitation to look at the wine cellar. The building was quite a span inside & after going down two long flights of tunnel stairs we entered a number of cellars which had light in them because of the location of windows on the side of the hill. These cellars were cement floored & quite neat with their kegelbush lined up in very available space. They were all empty so we could tell by observation (that's the way Lieberbach discovered prisoners - by going into the kegelbush) that the amount of liquid remaining therein. There were still some of the kegelbush here, which had covered the floor.