

good morning, sweets:

28 July 1944 Friday 9 A.M.

Things continue about the same in our dreary, uneventful lives. The company goes about doing the same things from hour to hour & I continue with reading Wolcott's Reader & occasionally looking for some diversion to try to make life a bit more interesting. Since I have started reading with a vengeance I have made myself more or less of a hermit, sitting in my little cubby-hole in the woods or sunning myself in the small opening beneath the trees. I decided last night that I had better do a bit more mixing with the officers lest they begin to think I was developing schizophrenic tendencies. However, there really is very little to talk about since most things happen to all of us at the same time & there is no point in re-discussing something which has been completely discussed at the time of its occurrence. We have talked politics & war strategy until we are blue in the face & are all of the conclusion (probably the wish is father to the thought) that the war in Europe will be over before winter but that much hard fighting is still in store for us before the war is won. We have considerable indefinite knowledge of what lies ahead, having talked to this one who has returned from the front lines, & to that one who talked to so & so who attended a meeting where such & such was said. Since addition of various minute facts gradually build up a picture, we have such a mosaic, as it were; be it right or wrong.

John finished Studs Lonigan yesterday (he is an extremely rapid reader). He had not liked it & I don't believe he would have finished it at all if I hadn't teased him about it. He, as was I, was depressed by the book but it made all of us, Van, John, & I reminisce about the places where we had lived as children. I told them about Betts St & Clinton St. & the Wade St. gang & expressed my opinion that environment did, despite author Farrell's denial of it, play the greatest part in Studs' downfall. I cited the wadestreeters gang, with their familial background very similar to that of Studs & the number of them who got into trouble & spent greater or lesser portions of their lives in jail, & just two or three blocks away Clinton St. with its Jewish Center & more or less directed means of recreation so that energies would be directed into proper channels, and the resultant low juvenile delinquency & the large number of good citizens resulting. Have you ever stopped to consider the large number of professional men that has developed out of the small group of fellows of the age group that I was in? Sander Cohen, Chip, Ben, & I, Dave Gralber, Rockewern, Dave Kerner, Charlie Young, Boris Zemsky, to mention just a few & not including the lawyers. There is no question but that a proper environment does make the difference between good citizens & citizens of the Studs Lonigan variety. Van told us a bit about the Dayton area in which he had lived only a block away from a Studs-Lonigan-type of community, & John seemed to have

been protected from any such deleterious influences, altho he was aware of their existence.

After reading the illogical & unintelligent intolerance of Jews & negroes in Studs Lonigan it was refreshing to reread "My Little Boy" by Carl Ewald the Danish Writer in Wobblcott's Reader. I'm sure you remember the story of how the author is trying to bring his son up properly in his preschool days, teaching him lessons in money evaluation, democracy, the importance of keeping his word, etc. I'm sure you remember the chapter wherein "My Little Boy" joins the group which is persecuting the little Jewish lad for no reason other than his being Jewish & how My Little Boy comes in flushed with excitement of the chase & how the daddy learning what has occurred grabs my little boy's hand to run & find the poor boy who had been mistreated in order to beg his pardon. Being unsuccessful in their search they return & the father tells the lad the history of the Jews: "the whole day is devoted to ^{the} Jews."

"We look at old books on the shelves which I love best to read & which were written by a Jew with a wonderful name, which a little boy can't remember at all. We learn that the most famous man now living in Denmark is a Jew."

"And, when evening comes & Mother sits down at the piano & sings the songs which father loves above all other songs, it appears that the words were written by one Jew & the melody composed by another."

"My little boy is hot & red when he falls to sleep that nite. He turns restlessly in bed & talks in his sleep."

"He is a little feverish," says his mother.

"And I bend down & kiss his forehead & answer, calmly:

"That is not surprising. To-day I have vaccinated him against the meanest of all mean & vulgar diseases."

What a beautiful way of using child psychology & how much better a result one can expect from a youngster so taught than one like Studs who was taught that "the international Jewish bankers of Wall Street" were responsible for everything which didn't go the way his father desired.

I believe "My little boy" shall always be mine & when I think back to the time I spent with my little girl, I feel that the job was not being poorly done.

To accentuate the nostalgia brought on by reading "My Little Boy" was a steam engine of some sort chugging away up in the mountain opposite us - probably in a quarry of some type - sounding just like a RR train rushing thru Greenfield with its whistle wide open. It reminded me of the days when we would, just as you do now without me, go down to the station to watch the trains pass thru, or how Judy would sit ^{on the curbstone} with her feet in the gutter & watch the trains pass by down South 4th St. Everything I do, see, or read brings back memories.

I believe I told you that the addition of Cpl. Herbert ^{to the company} was going to cause complications. Well it has. I had planned on making Paul Ruth liaison sgt. in Macri's place & as a preliminary step upwards I recommended him from PFC to Corporal. The correspondence on the subject is becoming more interesting by the day. Let me give you a copy -

With the recommendation to raise Ruth temporarily to corporal on his way up to sergeancy I sent the following note "Corp. Herbert, who was transferred to my company in the grade of corporal, is overage at the present time as I have no T/O job open calling for that rank." W.F.

Ans. "Why not promote one of the present corporals to sgt. so that the overage corporal can be absorbed?"

Reply "The sergeancy open is in the liaison section. PFC. Ruth is the most qualified enlisted man in the company for this job. Since he will be holding the job of liaison sgt. it will be unfair to him to give someone else a sergeancy for a job which they do not hold." W.F.

Ans. "This will cause an overage of one cpl., even after liaison sgt. has been made."

Reply "True. I wouldn't like to break Herbert until I have had the opportunity to evaluate his worth to the company in combat. Do not contemplate demoting any of my corporals at present." W.F.

Ans. "If the situation is such that this enlisted man in question is the best & only one qualified, believe that you should re-evaluate the worth of the other two corporals present to the company. If ultimately a balance is reached wherein the T/O is satisfied both in personnel & grade see no reason why promotions cannot be made on merit. However, in this particular case, I feel that it is unwise to establish the precedent of jumping grades particularly over men already senior. Such action usually breeds ill-will among E.M. & leads to a lowering of morale in the company. However, in all cases of promotion in the future I request that you evaluate the eligibles thoroughly." (Maj. Campbell)

There you have it. Ruth is the man for the job & I am going to have him do the work even tho he does so without the rank. During combat we should be able to evaluate the various men & gradually straighten out the situation.

Yesterday I went into the neighboring town to see whether Pietro Costagli had started on the busts & sure enough he had started on Elaine's. I was thrilled as could be when I saw how the ringlets on her head are going to look. I took one of the boys along as an interpreter but found that I could make myself understood with an occasional Italian word plus gestures to get my message across. Of course the features are not yet recognizable but you can see that it will be adorable. We talked price but he still won't commit himself. He wants to see how much work is entailed before he comes to a definite conclusion. I told him to send you the bill along with the statues (there is the possibility that mail service will be established & thus he will be able to send them to you direct, otherwise he will send them thru Father Joe). It looks like the price may be as high as \$150 but he told me that if I could get him a pair of shoes he would reduce the price considerably. This is a most irregular thing to do & it is unlikely that I shall do it, altho I do feel that it would make a good deposit to assure his completion of the job. But with regard to the price, \$150 each for 3 busts - 1 foot tall - is not much from my viewpoint. I think you will feel the same way when you see the finished product. I ended up with another purchase at the workshop. I have one more thing to buy & then I shall be thru (I hope).

Well, darling, that is much more than I expected to write to-day, in view of our lack of activity, but somehow or other I do find things to talk to you about that would be most inappropriate for anyone else & as a result I can always fill a few pages to you.

All my love, darling,

Walt