

My girl:

Sat. 29 July 1944 1 P.M.

Another race against time & the postman. Mail goes out at 2 so I doubt whether I'll finish. Yes it takes me more than an hour per day to write to you - in fact I guess I average at least 2 hours per day in this vicarious pleasure.

At the present moment I'm full of the subject of busts - not the voluptuous type that the Italian girls are so well endowed with & which give so many of our G.I.s ideas, but ivory white, simon pure, beautiful (say! that could fit the Italian girls at that) artistic busts of Judy & Lanie. The last day I was in to see Pietro he was well along with Lanie's bust but it still was not recognizable; but to-day! Oh me! I could see Rochlyn in Lanie's face. I studied & studied & looked from this angle & that & finally came to the conclusion that it was Elaine, alright, but not exactly as her pictures show her. After considerable evaluation & with Van's impersonal help, I decided that he had her eyes spaced a bit too ^{close} ~~far~~ & that her cheeks were not full enough. He took me down to an art school where he has the professor working on Judy's bust. As I walked into his room I recognized the back of Judy's head & then as I walked forward thrilled no end, I caught a glimpse of her profile from the rear & it looked just as I remember her, but her face from the front view was not quite right & after serious study both of the bust & of the photographs it was concluded that her face was not quite full enough. The professor got the idea & I am to go back this afternoon to see whether it is improved. Pietro has done an excellent job on Elaine altho he hasn't captured her baby appearance & she looks more like a four-year old. If only I can hang around this place a bit longer I'll be ~~all~~ as happy as can be to see the finished products of those two. The professor is going to make the model of you while Pietro works on the plaster & marble of the busts of the kids. Even if we should move I will try to get back if the distance is not too great. I was so surprised to see your face in the face of Elaine, not that that shouldn't be, for it is only natural, but you know I've always had difficulty ~~in~~ seeing you in the kids - probably my vanity & possessiveness. It reminded me of the days of our early married life when your hair was bobbed. I just can't get over the unexpected thrill.

Pietro understood that I was not completely satisfied with Lanie so he worked on it while I sat in the jeep awaiting Roe Blier who had gone into town with us to bring a few things for Leif. He called me in later & there was a definite improvement but she still looks a bit older than she is. After all you can't catch the mischief or sparkle in those eyes on a marble or, as it is at present, a clay model. I'm really quite enthusiastic about the idea, even now after seeing the models, so I guess they are pretty much like the kids.

I'll close now & write a fuller letter tonight.

Love,
Walt.

Hello, my darling:

29 July 1944 7:30 PM.

Oh me! I'm soaked to the skin + so is everything else I own. It simply poured this afternoon + it was my tough luck to be away when the worst part of the rain occurred. Let me tell you about it. ~~As you~~

As you know, all towns are off limits, so that my boys have been unable to visit the nearby town to buy souvenirs. Since it is permissible for one officer to go to town to buy things for the company, I decided to take the weapons carrier to town, have it loaded with the types of things which I have been buying + bring it to the area + let the men ~~to~~ see what they bought. I figured that if I couldn't take the men to town, I'd bring the town to them. So I went to the same place where I have been getting my things and had them load all their small items plus a few larger ones + brought them, along with a couple of salesmen, to the area. The men bought them out of every worthwhile item in a few minutes. The only thing left were some relatively unattractive vases. We re-turned to the shop + this time brought back some larger items, since they were all out of smaller items, + while I was there I took another look at the clay models of Judy + Elaine. They look swell + will look even better in alabaster with its white color, rather than the gray of the clay.

On our way back to the area we ran into a rain storm, + in these mountains that is really a storm. I was immediately anxious about my things because I had hung up all my blankets + sleeping bag + had removed the shelter tent in order to let things get the sun. Since I am in such a secluded nook I was afraid no one would notice my things + they would be soaked. Fortunately one of the boys had thought of my stuff + tossed my bedding on the bed + thrown the shelter tent over the mosquito bar which was suspended between two trees. As a result, the tent didn't cover it all + so water ran down the edges into the bedding roll + every bit of my clothes which I keep there was completely soaked. In addition the water ran into one of the pockets of the bedding roll where I keep my shoe shining equipment plus extra toilet articles. The shoe brushes were floating about at the top of almost a gallon of water that had accumulated in the pocket. Fortunately my bedding didn't get very wet. My dispatch case, in which I carry my stamps + air mail envelopes was soaked, so that I'll have to send these back to the PO + get them exchanged. One of the flaps of my bedding roll was hanging down to the ground - this I had done purposely when fixing up my bed the first night so that I could place some of my things beneath the bed + have them protected from rain. I didn't realize at that time that a stream ran under my cot when it rained. As a result the flap held the water back + got everything under the bed got soaked. You should see how muddy that flap is. When I lifted it the water practically washed me off my feet as it ran toward + into my slit trench. I'll tell you about that slit trench later. All my labors for naught - an hour + a quarter of back breaking, hand-blistering labor. I'll never be able to use it. Better to take the chance with air raids rather than dive into that pool of water + make drowning a certainty if I kept my head in. The gifts, which I had carefully packed in straw, were soaked + as a result some of the gloss is not as evident as it was. If we stay here long enough I'll take it back up + have them put some more on. I fixed up the bed as best I could (i.e. after the rain finally stopped in an hour or so) + now have my clothes hanging up to dry. It's such a shame that they were soaked since I had just had my OD's laundered + pressed + they looked swell.

About the most miserable time soldiers have is when it rains as hard as it did to-day. We had to eat chow in the rain + there was a torrent of water rushing down the hills.

just past our kitchen + the men had no choice but to stand in this water while being served. Of course the rain got into the food but this didn't seem to perturb the men very much for they stood about in the rain + ate just as tho it were a beautiful sunshiny day. The mud was so deep that one of the kitchen crew took off his shoes + served in bare feet. A number of the boys who had not taken the usual precautions against rain had all their blankets + clothes soaked. I'm afraid we'll have a lot of men in the company who won't sleep well to-mite.

Van had moved his things into the CP before the rain started so he got off very well. John, Skip, + Drady sleep in a tent so their things were dry, but they hadn't ditched their tent against rain + as a result pretty much water got into it before they were able to dig a channel right thru the center of the tent + have a stream flowing in one door + out the other. Oh! this outdoor life is wonderful! I'll never go camping again after I become a civilian - not if I can help it.

When I went up to the town + explained to the proprietor what we wanted him to do, he was overjoyed + so appreciative that he offered to give me something free. I picked a nice pair of bookends, but he didn't think that was snuff + suggested a statue. I then picked out a statue, the best thing in the place, but he said that it was worth \$20.00 + offered to let me have it for 10.00. I was not interested + had picked a bust of a child when he walked in with a statue of a stork or some other long-legged wading bird. It was of very attractive colors with a streaked pink base, yellow legs + bill, + gray head + body plus the blackest eyes you ever saw. I asked him whether that would do as the present + he agreed, so you're going to get that plus a cigarette box of mosaic layers of alabaster + agate, + a large round container of some sort. I know I'm overloading you, but what you don't want you can give to the family. Distribute it as you wish. Maybe I'm nuts for buying all this stuff but it's all hand made, foreign made, + characteristic of this section of Italy so that I really feel it is worth it. I wouldn't spend money so freely if I felt that we needed it, but after all you have been able to save on your allowance, so I guess I'll probably continue to spend my allowance.

Now I think I'll do some cleaning up of my note book.

I've told you before of Swede Anderson, one of the radicals of the company who is always starting discussions + arguments. I'm sure you remember my telling you of the discussion I had with Swede back in the rest area before the push started + also of the class on orientation which we had him conduct just for the novelty of it. Swede is the type of fellow who, before the war, would work until he had \$300 - 400 saved + then quit work + have a good time until his money was gone. The army hasn't changed him. Walter Winchell had something in his column which immediately brought Swede to my mind. He said, "He adds more heat than light to a discussion."

Swede's direct opposite + therefore the one with whom he enjoys arguing most, is Boyce Toole, a southerner who comes from a wealthy family + has considerable money in his own right. You can imagine the arguments these two get into + how the entire company joins in. They keep all of the boys interested when things drag around here. Every meal they start a "discussion", Swede in his loud voice + Boyce with his quiet southern accent + soon half the company is sitting around them, throwing in their little bit, or just listening + enjoying it.

I am quite amused with Macri, my new 1st sqt. He has always slept in a pup tent along with Hugo Simile, our mail clerk, & Laver Louis Kolarik - they are an inseparable marketeers. Since Macri has gotten his new job he sleeps in the CP on a cot & is complaining that he hasn't slept since he got his new job because it is too cold sleeping alone. Of course, sleeping on the ground in a pup tent is much warmer than sleeping up off the ground on a cot, every thing else being equal. I wonder if the business of sleeping alone wasn't ^{behind} the argument Macri started to-day with Hugo, who is to marry just as soon as he gets back to the states, regarding the merits of a double bed as compared with twin beds. The argument was still raging when I pulled Macri away to go to town & me.

Macri is very clever & often cracks wise. The other night the boys were crowded in the tent listening to the radio when a discussion regarding the merits of Sinatra arose. He has several fans among the younger boys in the company. Macri put an end to the discussion with the following statement. "When I was on my 4 day pass at rest camp I saw a movie with Sinatra in the lead. Next to me was sitting an Italian Signorina. She didn't bat an eyelash while Frankie sang. Then I smiled at her & she swooned."

Shorty Thurn came in yesterday for a new helmet liner because his had been run over by one of our trucks when it went a little farther up the hillside than usual. Macri sarcastically said, "It's a good thing you weren't in it."

The last time we were at the Clearing Company, which is located in a place which was formerly a battle ground, we noted some shell holes spaced about like this : • • . Macri jumped up & "Reminds me of a woman." Many of these stories lose their humor in the retelling, but they really are funny in their original setting. Of course, most G.I. humor is of a variety that can't be repeated in a parlor. Eg. One of the boys received a letter from his girl telling him to send a request to her & she would send him any thing he wanted. He exclaimed, "G.. D...! She knows she can't send that in a box!"

The rain has finally settled the dust on the roads, but you should have seen me the other day. We went into town & I forgot to take my dust goggles with me. I haven't ordinarily been wearing my glasses these days, usually forgetting to put them on in the morning & going all day without them despite my almost constant reading. So I didn't even have my glasses to protect me. Coming back we ran into a convoy & such dust you never saw. It was absolutely opaque. I had to ride all the way back with my eyes closed & you should have seen what I looked like by the time we got to our area. I looked as tho I had dived into a flour barrel. I ended up by having to take a complete bath.

I finished Wobblcott's Reader yesterday & was going to send it to you in the box with the gifts but it, too, got wet so that I think I'll dry it out before I send it. I really enjoyed it.

I told you about the doughnuts we had the other day, but I didn't tell you about what a pig I made of myself. They were finished at noon, but weren't served to the men until supper time. However, we officers had them both at noon & supper. I ate at least a half dozen at noon & again had even more than that at supper. There were still enough left over for some for breakfast, so I really enj

myself. To add to all this, the red cross came around & gave us a large sack of special doughnut mix. That means we'll have more doughnuts in the near future. However, I don't believe their mix makes as good a doughnut as does our company baker with just ordinary ingredients. The reason the red cross gave us the mix was that their doughnut machine, with which they can make 5-6000 doughnuts per day, is in disrepair & the doughnut mix keeps coming in just the same so they have to get rid of it or have more than they can carry with their limited transportation.

Apparently the fame of our good cooks is getting around because we have been having a large number of soldiers from neighboring units drop in to eat with us. They are not with their regular units but are a skeleton crew & so have no kitchen & have to eat K rations. We have about 30 of them at each meal & somehow or other we seem to be able to find enough food to feed everyone.

Now, regarding the slit trench & dug. It seems that the clearing company had an exciting time with some Jerry planes the other night, but fortunately no serious damage was done. A number of tents got some pieces of shrapnel thru them - among these was Bill Booker's, most of whose clothing & tent were full of holes - fortunately he wasn't in it. Apparently this made them realize that no area is invulnerable to attack from the air & they realized the importance of slit trenches more than ever. As a result an order came down requiring every member of all companies to have a slit trench. So we spent yesterday evening digging. Have I got blisters! The ground is of tough clay that you have to use a pick on since a shovel alone simply gets you nowhere. Add to this that the area I selected, next to my bed, has many trees & bushes with the numerous roots which these naturally require & you will see what a job I had. However, I decided that I'd finish it before dark, come what may, so that it would be ready for any air raids. It was quite a good slit trench & I was proud of my handiwork, but woe is me! it has all gone for naught.

Did I tell you it is now official & the Colonel has left us for good? He is going to be corps surgeon & Maj. Campbell is taking over our battalion. Happy day. Things should be happier now. Another change which has occurred - not so welcome to me - is that Mike is undergoing an operation for his hernia & will probably not be back. Capt. Thompson has been given the job of regimental surgeon despite the fact that he was outranked by Capt. Kirby. Tommy is a queer duck & it is hard to reason with him, so that he may be unreasonable in his demands. However, with diplomatic, tactful John to work with him I think that we will get along, somehow. Our medical set up in this combat team, according to division, has functioned better than that of the other combat teams - from their viewpoint that means that the records from our combat team come thru with fewer mistakes. The reason for this was 2 fold - Mike & I had worked out a system whereby my clerks gave him all the necessary information daily - & Mike had a clerk - a T/3 - who is quite clever & knows all the things which division wants in their reports. Since Tommy has taken over he is planning to make some changes which will snafu this set up. He, naturally, wants to take care of some of the boys with whom he has become accustomed to work at his previous job. He plans to send many of the group in HQ out to the battalions & bring his own men in. I'm afraid this will only result in confusion. The sqt. in charge of HQ medical section has already applied for transfer to a different type of unit outside our division because he is sure that he will be demoted otherwise. The T/3, about whom I spoke above, was over to see me yesterday, all worried about the situation, telling me about it, not because he expected me to be able to do anything about it, but simply because he

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felt he had to have someone ^{whom to} ~~to~~ bare his mind & troubles. I suggested he sit tight & see how things work out.

I don't believe I tolds you - oh I guess I did in this morning's letter, about the professor who is modelling Judy in clay. It is looking rather much like her.

You should see Van; at the present moment he is sitting on his haunches on his cot, undressed for bed, writing a letter to his wife. His system of writing would never satisfy you since I have spoiled you with my verbosity. It takes him about as long to write one page as I take to write two, & I write very much smaller than he. Because of his weighing of each word he doesn't write as much & as a result tends to write a running letter for a few day period before he mails it. However he does send a daily V-mail. Seeing how impatient he is for mail one would think that he would change to my system of fuller & more frequent letters, but he seems satisfied with his method.

The ingenuity of the G.I. showed itself again to night. A game of cards was in progress (it's surprising that the boys have any money left this late in the month) & because of the rain the cards were so sticky that it was impeding the progress of the game. One of the boys decided to dust them with foot powder & it worked like a charm. Just give these boys adverse conditions & they're sure to find a remedy for it.

Well, sweets, this should make up for the short letter I sent you this morning.

All my love to you, dearest,

Walt-