

Hello Darling:

30 July 1944

8 months since I last saw you.

What a day I've had. I've spent the entire time rectifying the damage done by yesterday's downpour. You should have seen me. I had six clotheslines strung up between the trees around my bunk & each & everyone was full to overflowing - in fact I did have extra clothes laying on all the bushes around. It's a good thing I'm a string saver - it came in handy this time. No don't send me any more string, I still haven't touched the ball you sent me. I started off right after breakfast by putting up my strings & hanging all my clothes & bed clothes on them. Then I had to dry out the horribly muddy flap on my bedding roll & dry out the pockets that had been filled with water. I sat around while all the mess dried, reading, writing a few letters (Soph, Edie, & Chip), & rinsing out the mud from the dirtiest garments. Every little bit, as the flap dried out more, I brushed the dried mud away with a stiff brush that I got from the kitchen. Fortunately we had a good strong sun all day long so that I have finally have gotten things straightened out, except for the pockets which are still damp. As a result of these wet pockets I am unable to put some of my stuff in them, so that the area around my cot is still somewhat cluttered up, but it will be all set by morning.

Last nite is a night I'll remember for a long time. Altho my bed clothes weren't actually wet they were damp so that I had a soggy feeling all nite long. Add to that the fact that occasional drops of water dropped from the trees & striking the mosquito bar, would splatter into a fine spray & strike me in the face, & you get some idea why I awakened repeatedly during the nite. Even tho I'd duck my head under the covers to avoid those drops of water, still in my sleep I'd uncover myself & be awakened by the next drop. I'll catch up in sleep to-nite, tho.

Gosh for the last 4 hours we've been discussing the merits of our non-cons - a discussion as usual started by Swede Anderson. All his criticism is destructive & he never has any remedies to suggest to correct conditions.

31 July 1944

I'm afraid that I have neglected you & that you won't get a letter from me for yesterday - reason - time consumed by Swede & time consumed by meeting at Bn HQ to-day. As a result you can expect another one of those disconnected letters.

It was a shame that I spent my time writing to Soph, Edie, & Chip in the afternoon & then didn't find time to get off a letter to you in the evening.

Van has been busy the past few days carving a candleholder out of some alabaster. He has temporarily given up on the statue of his youngster because he claims he doesn't have the proper instruments. I really believe that he has undertaken too difficult a job & doesn't want to admit it. Altho I haven't mentioned it to him, another typical example of his selfishness occurred on the day it rained so hard. He didn't do a thing to protect any of my stuff from the rain - the exception of my chair, which he took out of the rain so that he might use it. I guess I'll learn in time.

We were honored (?) by a visit from Col. Patterson yesterday. He had the shoulder patch of the corps with which he is now associated. As usual he had practically nothing to say, answering questions but never speaking unless spoken to. I don't imagine it will take them long to find him out for what he is in his new job. He didn't even look around the area which is really the main job he has, i.e. checking things & offering suggestions for improve-

ment. I can't see why he bothered visiting ⁻²⁻ at all.

The other day I took Moe (the blow) Blier into town with me to pick up some souvenirs for kids at a different shop than I had been going to. After doing all that I wanted to do in town, which took about an hour, I waited another hour on Moe, but no Moe & finally I returned without him. He caught a ride back quite late in the afternoon - he's a shrewd one is Moe & he'll make a day of it any chance he gets - & brought in some very attractive pieces.

Yesterday Dredy went into a nearby town & met the priest at church services & was invited out to lunch. He seemed to have had quite an interesting afternoon since he didn't come back until just before supper. He returned with some delicious Italian cookies which we all enjoyed.

Since our typewriter has been out of order for so long we tried to borrow one from HQ. Macri was up there yesterday & he spoke to Tag about it. Tag, feeling that he is now an officer of Co C, even tho he hasn't joined up with us yet, tried to get Stroggi to lend us his. Stroggi who is really quite clever, retorted, "You can't order us around any more, Vitagliano, you're not the master sgt. now." I hope you get the army humor in that remark.

Our company, these days, looks like a post office with all the packages which are going home. Just about every man in the company has bought things & is busy wrapping, boxing, & mailing it. Our APO says Co. C sends more packages than any other company in the division, & I believe them.

That discussion last nite with Swede & some of the other men in the company was quite something. Swede always starts arguments & gets off the subject & ends up with arguments on entirely unrelated subjects. He is a natural complainer, never being satisfied with any state of affairs, and yet he can offer no remedies for conditions. The talk was worthwhile for one reason - he complained, & was backed up by some responsible men in the company who were present, that a number of our non-coms kept hidden during the most dangerous portion of the push. When I asked him to name the men he refused, saying he wouldn't "rat" on any one. He complained that we didn't pick the non-coms carefully enough, but when I asked him what method I should use (I have a meeting of all officers to make the decisions) he couldn't give me the slightest constructive idea. We talked & argued until past 11 PM with Van & John entering the discussion, & after that John, Macri & I talked until midnite about possible remedies of the situation. Actually there is no way of finding out if the boys won't tell us. It is certainly up to the non-coms as one of their functions, to tell us when the boys refuse to go out, but if the non-coms themselves are involved, then they are afraid to talk. The thing is you can't catch them at it, if the boys won't tell, because when you i.e. an officer, goes up they all do what is expected of them. I guess we'll catch up with them somehow.

This morning I decided to go to Bn HQ, which is now much closer to us than it was formerly. I had a couple of things I wanted to talk to Maj. Campbell about - particularly the case of Ruth, about whom we had had so much correspondence. Actually we still haven't come to any real decision as to what we'll do on the case, but I intend to break a couple of men, anyhow, so that should solve the problem.

On the way up to Bn I stopped in at the town & left the pieces of sculpture to be refinished where the rain had taken the finish off them. However apparently they couldn't do much about it because they didn't look any different when I picked them up later in the day. I took another look at the busts of the kids & I'm just thrilled with them. I gave him \$10.00 & arranged with him to also send the plaster models. The last time I spoke with him he had raised his price to \$50 each, but I don't think you should pay more than the \$40⁰⁰ he originally thought they'd be. That would total \$110 & if they come out as well as I think they will it will be worth 10 times that much to us. They really will be something to live with for the rest of our lives & I'm sure they will give us plenty of pleasure. I know that I'm sending you an awful lot of stuff & if you kept it all it would make the house overfurnished, so ~~you~~ wait until I'm all thru sending stuff i.e. after you have received all the packages, & then you might give odd pieces to whomever you wish. It might be a good idea to distribute it to members of the family that I have missed with souvenirs.

I hadn't planned on hanging around the clearing station but I learned that a meeting was to be held @ 1³⁰ & since it was a bit too long a trip to make & then return for the meeting I decided to stay. I shmoozed with Bill Booher for a time & of course we had much in common to talk about because we had both discussed the political changes long before they took place. He is pleased no end because he had had considerable difficulty ~~in~~ our former CO, too. Nothing serious of course, but little irritating things. For example, enlisted men from the kitchen & motor pool of HQ & the Clearing Company were sleeping in wall tents while Bill had to sleep in a pup tent. When he suggested that this really wasn't proper, the colonel blew up about it ~~but~~ and ended up by ignoring Bill's complaint. However, the 1st thing Maj. Campbell did when he took over was to stop that cold & turn over the wall tents to the officers. Bill told me about the air raid he experienced the other nite. He was in the treatment tent when he heard the 1st bomb drop & he ran outside to make the electrician turn off the generator in order to darken the area. A second bomb dropped, not too far away so he dropped to the ground & hugged it, plenty scared. Booher & Sledge

sleep together in a ^{small} wall tent (large enough for 2 cots) & Sledge was asleep in the tent at the start of the raid. He awakened at what was apparently the third bomb & jumped out of bed & dropped flat on the ground - the next bomb dropped right outside his tent & he got a few tiny pieces of shrapnel in the backs of his legs - not enough to even be sent farther back from the clearing station but enough to get him a purple heart. He didn't even realize he had been hurt until after the raid was entirely over & he went over to the treatment tent to discuss it. If Bill had been in his bed he would unquestionably have been killed. His air mattress was punctured in 17 places, a large piece of shrapnel had gone thru his cot just where his back would have been had he been in bed, a box he had, made of heavy wood, was entered thru 1 side by a piece of shrapnel which destroyed a box of cigars inside & made its exit thru the opposite side of the box. His cot i.e. the wooden portion of it, was splintered in several places by shrapnel & some of his clothes was ruined. All in all there is no question that he is a lucky man. The reaction to it by everyone was, of course, stark terror. A subsequent & more interesting reaction is that now every man digs a slit trench as soon as he gets into a new area (something most unusual for the clearing company to do before this time) & also the guardsmen at night were so over anxious that they would call "Air Raid" every time a plane came over, friend or enemy, so that they began to have to get up 3 or 4 times a night until ~~these~~ rules were made stopping this.

I had chow with the officers at the clearing station & as usual it was rather good & in a nice setting. I met Felix Mercato - the Capt. about whom I told you before, who is now an executive officer (asst to the chief) of one of the battalions in our combat team (he is really stepping up steadily) which calls for a majority. We chatted about our experiences in combat, since we had very much in common & Felix, who is a whiz on tactics, predicted that the European war will be over by Aug 15. I wish I was that hopeful.

The meeting was very interesting to me for several reasons. Actually what Maj. Campbell had to tell us was nothing new at all because I had already carried all of it out with my company. The interesting things were two-fold - 1- he has made compulsory a suggestion which I made in the trial against Sgt. Hall, regarding the keeping of records on fatigue details for the men in the company. If no record is kept it is very easy for a sgt. to pick on men he doesn't like to over & over again to do the odd jobs in the company, & to let his friends get off without doing any such work at all. However, if he has to keep a record then the CO can

check on him at any time + make sure he is playing fair. The other interesting thing to me was Duncan's reaction at the meeting. With the previous CO Duncan did most of the discussing of the topics at the meeting - i.e. Patterson would introduce the subject, discuss it superficially + then Duncan would discuss it at length. However, after Maj. Campbell finished his discussion there simply was nothing to add + Duncan sat mute. He doesn't seem to be as happy + carefree as he was before, nor does Mc Atee, who didn't tease + kid me like he usually does. I learned that the clique had put up a strong fight to get the job of CO for Duncan but to no avail. Maj. Crosby who is really the ranking medical ~~sur~~ major of the division was really entitled to the job in view of the way the army works things by rank, but somehow he didn't get it. I am told that he wrote a letter to the General stating that the job which he now holds does not call for enough responsibility to warrant the rank of major for the officer holding it + he therefore requested that he either be demoted or transferred to a job worthy of the rank (that would mean out of the division). No word as to the outcome of the unusual request has come down.

I spoke to Jay + Paul Stroggi as to their reaction to the change @ HQ + they were both very cautious + replied that they hated to see the old Colonel go but liked Maj. Campbell very much. Paul was in well with the clique + I just learned that he pulled a stunt which strongly smacks of anti-semitism. Our chaplain - Protestant - has an assistant who is Jewish - a rather unusual set-up. This asst is a very hard worker + yet, altho his job calls for a T/5 he has been kept a Pvt. even tho the Chaplain requested his promotion. The Chaplain's bosses at Corps demanded an explanation from him as to why his asst was not a T/5 + he gave his explanation that the CO refused to give him the rating. They then replied that the man should be given the rating or transferred out, + Stroggi chose to transfer him rather than give him the T/5, despite the fact that Chap. Chandler liked him + wanted him to remain. I guess you can't get away from it.

Well, sweets, it's 11:20, time for bed. I have a meeting to attend in the AM at my combat team's HQ so I'm sure I won't have time to add to this already too long epistle.

All my love to you, my darling.

Walt -