

Hello my sweet:

3 November 1944 Wednesday

This morning I mentioned in my V mail how nice the weather was to-day. Here it is only two hours after I wrote that letter and it's raining cats and dogs. Not only that but it's getting colder by leaps and bounds. If this keeps up, we'll be having snow before much longer, and believe me that is something that I would dread here in these mountains.

Yesterday I received a number of letters from you and one from Soph in which she is asking you to mail her some of my letters to you that I didn't send her carbons of. I'm making a carbon of this one, but actually, except when we are on the move and I have to write instead of typing, I will send her a carbon of any letters interesting enough for distribution to the family. At the present time things are so dull around here that there is really no reason for writing carbons.

This letter will be a conglomeration of odds and ends that seem to be accumulating in my notes.

5:30 P M

It's three hours since I started writing this letter. A number of things have arisen to hold me up from typing, but I imagine that I will now be able to continue without any more interruptions. The main interruption was a shelling by Jerry which was not too close to our building, but close enough to make us conscious of it. We then received a phone call that a couple of patients were expected in our station, as a result of the shelling, so I had to get busy and call an ambulance here from up forward to be ready to take care of them. Then after the ambulance was on its way back here, I received word that the patients were not coming here at all but were being taken to an aid station which is serviced by one of the other collecting stations, so that we didn't have the patients come to us after all. Since I had pulled back the last ambulance from up forward, I then had to call back to the rear in order to arrange for a couple of more ambulances to come up forward in case they were needed. By the time all this had taken place and I had eaten supper with the field artillery unit with whom we are housed, the three hours that I mentioned had passed.

You know, we have the most amusing situation which has arisen with respect to our beer ration. Formerly we received about two bottles of beer per month for each man. Then suddenly they got the idea that each man would drink two bottles of beer per day if this was issued to him. Well, to start with we didn't get an issue until quite a few were due us, and when it finally came in there were 11 bottles per man. Since many men don't drink beer you can imagine that the beer drinkers had all they might want. I felt that the problem of distributing this beer to the men who are up forward was simply too great a problem to add to the problems of supplying drugs and rations forward and evacuating patients to the rear, so I let the beer accumulate with the hopes that we would be pulled out of line and then have the opportunity of having one big party and getting rid of all of the beer. Well, that finally happened, but in the meantime we had gotten a ration of 13 bottles per man. Realizing that we couldn't use all this beer, I had it sent to our storage area to be kept there until we pulled out of the line again. Well, it looks like we won't be going to the rear for the time being and in the meantime we have had another issue of 13 bottles and the threat of another one coming up. As a result we are going to have so much beer that it will be a problem of transporting it if ever we move. Therefore we have handed out 13 bottles to each man (I received the full ration of 26 bottles at one time, can you imagine me drinking 26 bottles of beer?) and still haven't been able to get these 13 bottles to the men up at the front, but we plan to give it to them whenever they come back for a rest and are replaced by other men in the company. Since two bottles of beer per day are about all I care for even under warm weather conditions, it looks like I shall have to be giving away a fair quantity of the beer that I receive.

Our present location is a pretty safe one, since Jerry has no observation on this building and it would take observed shooting to do any damage to it. With the type of shells that Jerry throws, even if he hit the building, which would be a lucky hit, it still wouldn't do any damage to any of the personnel in the building, at least not on our floor. However, we do have some guns not too far away from us and he occasionally tries to locate these by the sound method, resulting in occasional shells dropping in our vicinity, but never close enough to the building to bother us very much. The other night Jerry came over in his plane (I wonder if he has more than the one that seems to come over occasionally) but again we are rather safe from any bombing or strafing since we are located in the mountains away from any important roads and installations. When he comes over he is usually looking for areas farther back than we are. So you see, all in all, this is a pretty safe place. If I must remain in the Italian mountains, I would just as soon stay here as any where else in them. One thing I am thankful of is the fact that it is Jerry artillery and not American artillery that is shooting at us.



After talking to the officers of the field artillery and learning something about how they work and then having an explanation as to how the German artillery works, it becomes apparent why we are so superior to them and have been able to make our advance so steady. Altho I have read some of the things which they told me in magazines from home, yet there are other things that they have explained to me which are probably military secrets and therefore I'd better forget about the whole thing for the time being. Suffice it to say that it gives one a nice feeling of security to know that our artillery is on our side and not on the Jerries.

The other night our weapons carrier did not get here with our supper, or dinner really, so we decided to make Mulligan stew from our 10 in 1 rations. Mulligan stew, if you don't happen to know, is a stew commonly made by hoboes. It consists of every type of food the hoboes are able to beg, borrow, or steal, thrown into a common pot and made into a stew. The boys up forward, along with Lt. Vitagliano who acts as the cook, have been making it and we have heard how delicious it is and decided to try it. Van was the cook, and I'm afraid that he put far too much food into the pot and not enough water. Despite this it was quite good but there was a tremendous amount left over.

Speaking of food, we had quite a problem turn up with the litter bearers. When the roads were in good shape we used to take rations up to them with our vehicles. Ordinarily they pick up their rations with the battalion aid stations. ~~And~~ However, when they began to get better rations from us than they did from the aid stations and this without even having to go after them, they failed to pick up their rations at the aid stations which in turn stopped ordering rations for them. Now, with the roads bad because of the rains, the ambulances don't go all the way up to the litter bearers' hangout, and in fact don't even return to our company with the patients but take them to a clearing station other than ours and as a result no rations were getting up to them from us and the aid stations were not ordering rations for them so that they ran out of food. Did they scream! John called me up and insisted on getting a couple of mules just for the litter bearers to take up rations to them. I knew that that was most unlikely, since mules are used by the infantry and they won't give up any of their mules for love or money. However, I called up the executive officer to see what he could do about it. He told me that he couldn't let us have any mules but that he would see that the aid stations would have rations for the men the very next morning. On calling John back to let him know the situation, I learned that one of the boys had talked to one of the Italian muleteers and he was going to see that he brought some stuff up to them on one of the mules the following morning, so it looks like the boys will be fed by both the aid station and my company. That should make them quite happy.

In this army the man with the "know-how" can often get things which others who go thru regular channels are never able to obtain. We thought we were doing very well when we obtained two electric generators, one a small one which is issued for collecting companies since we put up a howl for the need of them in combat, and the other which our motor sgt. was able to pick up somewhere - where I have never asked him in order not to embarrass him. Both of these are now in poor working condition and we are looking high and low for a source to acquire another one since we can't get parts to repair this one. Well, in this field artillery unit with us there seems to be a warrant officer with the "know-how". He is regular army and must know someone in supply because, altho his unit is not entitled to have even one generator, they have three of them, and whenever one breaks down he is always able to trade it in and get a good one in its place. The officers upstairs have promised me that they will introduce him to me when he comes around and maybe I shall be able to work on his sympathy to get a good one for my company. As it is, the artillery is now furnishing this station with light, which is quite a convenience. The windows in these Italian buildings are all quite small and leave in only a minimum amount of light during the day time. In fact, since the war has passed by the buildings, there are no more intact window panes, and with rain and cold air blowing into the room at a terrific rate, it became a problem as to how we could have light without the accompanying cold air and rain. We finally figured out that our gas capes have a clear cellophane portion which it turns out makes quite a good window withholding the cold air and letting the light in. In fact, the idea was so well liked by our regimental group that they are going to do the same thing at their headquarters.

The other day some of our litter bearers with one of the aid stations were sent back for a rest. A few hours later the battalion they were with called up and I understood them to ask that their litter bearers should be sent back to them. This was utterly absurd, and I told the battalion so, but they insisted that I should send them up at once, or by noon



the following day at the latest. I called up John and he couldn't see the sense in it either so he called the aid station to find out just what was up. It turned out that they were talking about a quart of liquor which was coming to them and I was talking about litter bearers. I still can't figure out where the confusion came in, because I used the words litter bearers several times in our conversation, but I guess that they had their minds so set on the liquor that they didn't pay any attention to what I was saying. You know, each week a quart of liquor is issued to each aid station, distributed thru us to them, to give to patients that come into the station. It is interesting to note that some of the battalions never ask for their liquor share, whereas others start yelling for it before it is due to come to them. It is used by most of them for patients that come in thoroughly soaked by the rain and chilled to the bone, and in these cases, as long as the patient is then kept in the warmth, I don't think it is a bad idea. But the surprising thing is that some of the aid stations seem to use just as much when the weather is good as when it is bad. That, to me, suggests that it isn't the patient, but rather the aid station personnel that get the liquor.

Lt. Col. English visited with us the other day. Every once in a while he drops in on us and asks if we need anything. I have mentioned him to you many times. He is a west point graduate and is second in command in our regiment. He is from one of the southern states and has a southern accent so thick that you can almost spread it on a corn pone. As a rule he is extremely nice and considerate, and as far as I am concerned he has always been that way with me or members of my company; but I have seen his eyes flash fire at times and I am sure that he has a temper as quick as mine. However, he is very well liked by almost every one in the regiment. One of these days he should become regimental commander, especially since the departure of the commanding officer on either rotation or furlough (we still haven't learned). Temporarily we have received a man from our division headquarters to head our regiment, but I believe that this man is only with us temporarily in order to evaluate the qualifications of Lt. Col. English. I believe you met him at the officers club at Ft. Dix, an extremely handsome, well built relatively young man. While he was here one of the battalions called up for some drugs, talking to English and telling him that they needed it at once. Well, we're used to these urgent requests for drugs and usually ignore them unless they have some item which is really an emergency item. There were no such items in this order, but English insisted that we send back for it at once, saying that he would take it up forward if we delivered it to regimental hq. Well, that isn't the usual way we send drugs forward to the aid stations, and we wondered about it. Usually we send them forward with a member of our litter squad or the liaison man attached to the battalion requiring the drugs, or if ambulances are able to go all the way up to the aid station we send it up by ambulance. If all these methods are inconvenient, we usually send it up with the mule ~~train~~ train. However, we weren't averse to having the message center deliver our drugs for us. I didn't like the idea of sending back the only ambulance we had available, but a jeep would have too much trouble over these roads so I had no choice in the matter. After all when you receive a direct request from someone with more rank than you have, you usually have to consider it an order. He doesn't realize that when we send the ambulance back it means an all day trip. Well, at any rate, we did send the ambulance back and when it returned it dropped the packages off at regimental headquarters where they refused to accept it and the driver brought it back to us at the forward station. By this time it was too dark to bother making any more trips, and I decided to send it up to John at the ALP in the morning and have him take it up forward with him, since he was going out to visit the battalions. Well, he said he'd wait for it when I called him, but he decided not to wait, and as a result it finally went up the following day on the mule train. Two days to get up there, whereas if it had gone thru our regular channels of supply it would have taken only one day. However, the aid station didn't sing the blues and English was satisfied, so I guess everything turned out OK.

It's funny how I'll start out a letter with practically nothing to say and then write three pages and still feel that I've really said nothing in particular.

Well, that's all for the time being, at any rate, altho I still have lots of notes about little things which go on around here.

Mail is coming thru quite well, for a change. I received five letters yesterday and three to-day, all but one of them from you. They go all the way up to Oct. 20. Oh yes, I also received a package from you yesterday, about 5 cans of sardines, some chopped herring, and a box of Battricini's candies. The candies are delicious. I'll let you know about the others as I eat them. I really enjoy the pictures you send me of the kids. They are growing amazingly and I hate like the dance to miss this stage of both their lives. Maybe I'll be able to ground closer on the next ones. All my love, Walt.