

Good afternoon, my sweet:

Saturday 11 November 1944. 11:00

So this is armistice day! Well, you can't tell it around here. The guns still shake our building when they go off. The planes still fill the sky with their roaring as they come out of their dives over the Jerry lines, with the crump of their bombs or the staccato notes of their strafing guns accentuating the sounds. The murmur of distant trucks gradually increase to a whining purr as they plow their way thru the mud called a road which passes by our building, as they bring up the never diminishing list of supplies needed to keep an army at war or return to the rear for further loading. There is the "emulsion-cracking" sound of the vehicles as the tires pull away protestingly from the mud that tries to adhere to it, a sound surprisingly enough louder even than the motor of the vehicles. All this and heaven too. For if one ignores the sounds of war and the shoe-top-deep mud he becomes aware of a glorious fall day, warm enough to require no field jacket, colorful in the change from summer green to autumn's beautiful variety, beautiful in the sight of mountains caressing the sky on all sides, warmly at times, coldly at others, as attested by the snow on the mountain tops. This is a day which to me possessed a symbolic significance and I was hoping, against my more logical judgment, that it might result in the end of the second world war. Of course that is merely wishful thinking, and altho it is one of the things which help to keep up our morale, nevertheless we do not allow it to become too realistic and thus we do not suffer disappointments.

Another day passes, and despite the fact that we are pretty far back it doesn't go without leaving its mark of excitement in our memories. For yesterday Jerry sent over some planes while it was still light, a most unusual procedure and one which doesn't pay as Jerry found out to his sorrow. It was shortly before dusk that a couple of German planes flew over. We would never have been aware of this if we hadn't seen our ack ack going after them. Finally some of the boys with sharper eyes than mine were able to spot the planes against the gradual increasing darkness of the sky and gave a blow-by-blow description to the less eagle-eyed as to how close the ack ack came to the planes. Finally one of the boys said he saw the ack ack hit close to one of the planes and then saw the plane falter in its course and suddenly turn nose down and disappear from view out of control. We cynical soldiers didn't believe a word of this despite the fact that two of our men claimed to have seen it fall but later in the evening we received authoritative reports that at least two Jerry planes had been knocked down in our sector. The fact that the planes came over before dark made us believe that there would be more over before the night was out, and sure enough there were. Fortunately none of them were interested in our vicinity, a fact which made us all happy but did not make us any more careful with our light discipline. I had the opportunity of watching the Jerries strafe an area far to our rear and see ack ack going after him in tremendous quantities. That is one thing about which we cannot complain, we are very well protected by ack ack and the boys seem to be accurate. We don't get to see planes knocked down because Jerry usually doesn't come over in the daytime and when he is hit at night he doesn't burst into flames, necessarily, so that you can't tell what effect the ack ack has. Sometimes one will see the night sky filled with the red glow of the tracer bullets floating up toward a central point from all directions and soon thereafter the sky may be lit by a tremendous explosion, but you can't tell whether the plane has dropped a bomb or whether the explosion is the result of the plane itself striking the ground with bombs still in their racks. Jerry has been using more planes than we have been accustomed to seeing around here, but he really does very little damage, compared to the amount of damage that is waiting to be done. By that I mean that the GIs are extremely careless as to the possibility of air attack, coming out to watch an attack rather than getting into slit trenches, etc. There is no question that if Jerry had our planes or gas for his planes things would be far more uncomfortable for us than they are. I certainly am happy that he doesn't have.

I wonder if you read the article stating that the army is recruiting no more doctors for the time being. At the present moment they are going into the navy which still needs quite a few. I am hoping that this is a good sign and that it will mean that I will get to come home for good after the war in Europe is won. I'm not building up my hopes too much on this basis for we will need many doctors over here for the army of occupation and many more will be needed in the eastern theater of operations. Of course the number of doctors per men in the army of occupation should be much less than the proportion in combat, since the need for a medical battalion is totally gone as soon as we are out of combat, which accounts for at least 20 doctors per division. Then, too, the number of field hospitals and other types of hospitals will be greatly reduced and station hospitals used in their places. One station

hospital could be considered the equivalent of one general hospital, and when you figure that there will be no more battle casualties, you can easily realize what a surplus of doctors that this will leave the army. Mind you, this is personal conjecture of mine, and there is nothing official, even in the slightest sense, in what I think about the medical set up after the fighting is over. Since we have a fair amount of combat time, it is very possible that I may be among the more fortunate doctors who get to go home, but then again, since I don't know how much combat time the average run of doctors over here has, again I am only thinking wishfully. Well, I guess we'd better win the war first, anyway.

We also had some other excitement last night. We received a phone call from battalion (the fact that we have a phone should tell you that we haven't been moving much) to the effect that one of our guns had had a muzzle burst, i.e. a shell had exploded just after the shell had left the muzzle of the gun, and that the unit would send down someone to lead our ambulance up to the area where the accident had occurred so that they could bring the casualties in. We waited for almost an hour before anyone came and then it turned out to be the doctor of the outfit. It seems that he didn't even go down to see the casualties, but hurried in here to get an ambulance for them, a silly thing to do since even his jeep driver alone could have done that. He was all excited when he arrived, and was unable to give us any helpful information, eg. how many were injured, how badly, how many litter cases, how many walking wounded, how many ambulances he needed. All in all we were very disappointed in him. We sent one ambulance along with him, and in the meantime put in a call to his outfit to find out more information and to see whether they needed a second ambulance. Several hours later our ambulance returned empty, with the report that they had gone the wrong way over a one way road and finally ran into so much traffic that they couldn't get thru. A phone call to the unit from the place where they got stuck told them that the casualties had been evacuated by someone else's ambulances located much closer and more conveniently to them. We learned that the accident had occurred with the first shell fired from a new gun barrel. Apparently the barrel had some defect in it. Fortunately this type of incident is extremely rare, which is a good thing since it is equivalent of an enemy shell bursting just a few yards away from the gun and crew. It seems that as a gun is used over a long period of time its accuracy slowly diminishes until, after a certain definite number of shells fired by the gun, the barrel of the gun is replaced by a new barrel, whereupon its accuracy is just as great as if it were a brand new gun which had never been fired. It was some defect in this new gun barrel that seems to have caused the premature explosion of the shell, so we are told.

Another interesting incident occurred the other day. I told you that I had sent Van up to Runde's company to help out. Well, we later moved our station over to where Runde's forward station was (It was at that time that I returned here to our rear station in order to be near battalion hq. where I could transact business better). It seems that Runde's station was originally in a tent, but a day or two before we sent the station crew over to the new area they got a building to set up in. Well, Van had been there one day when he was chased out by a unit that insisted that they had priority on the building. Van put up a terrific squawk despite the fact that he had to argue with a full colonel, and in the end a call was made to the division G4 who overruled Van and he had to pitch a tent outside the building in which to work. We heard that Van was pretty sassy with this colonel and when word came to us from battalion Hq to send more information on the incident I figured that maybe the colonel had lodged some complaint against Van and that there was going to be a lot of red tape to go thru. Well, it seems that there is going to be plenty of red tape, alright, but it is going to be between our division and their division thru corps. It seems that this colonel was really wrong, if Van's statement is true, and that any hell raising may be with him rather than with Van. I'll let you know if I hear any more about it. The situation at present is that Van has written a formal statement of what went on, at the request of Col. Campbell and this will go to our general who will then take it up with Corps. Haurah for democracy, even in the army.

Macri received a letter from Allenczy yesterday which he turned over to me. I'd send it to you but it is far too vulgar. He is now back in the states and has been discharged from the army. He realized the seriousness of his getting out of the army when he had his army uniform taken from him and was discharged as a civilian. However, the thing which worried him far more was the failure to collect the cash which is given with honorable discharges. He is furious and blames me for all of it, saying that he is going to the veteran's administration to place an appeal for a change in type of discharge. Actually his is not a dishonorable discharge, but it is one without honor. He claims that he told the army that he drank at the time he was drafted. I am thoroughly amused with the whole situation.

The mail continues to do splendidly. The first Xmas packages are starting to come thru, and altho I didn't receive one as yet, I got some excellent candy to-day. My share of mail consisted of about 6 letters, dating as late as 3 November, which is really excellent time, especially when you figure that it was supposed to be delivered yesterday - only one week enroute! You mention about Morry Heiman getting married and also about his being injured. I believe I read in the Israelite that he had been in an airborne unit and was injured while making a jump, but not in combat. If so, I believe he is a lucky guy, because that is a rugged unit to have to fight with.

I am enclosing a picture of a youngster from New Haven, Conn. It seems that her dad is a photographer and uses pictures of her for advertising purposes. She bears a striking resemblance to Judy, which the officers in the company noticed and called to my attention. When I compared pictures of the two of them I, too was struck by this resemblance. See what you think of it.

Well, I'm going to have to get ready to go to town tomorrow. Since my pass has finally come thru I plan to take full advantage of it.

Those of you who have received carbon copies of these letters will have to be patient for the next few days, since I will not have the opportunity of using a typewriter while I am in town.

Bye now.

Walt.

✓
Eth
Gunny
Chip
Leo ✓
Louise ✓
Japh

...of the two of them I, too was struck by their resemblance. And what you
think of it.
Well, I'm going to have to go to town tomorrow. I don't know how much time
I shall have to take. I'll be back of it.
Those of you who have received copies of these letters will have to be patient
the next few days, since I will not have the opportunity of writing to you again
in town.
I am now.

Yours
W.H.

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