

Good evening, darling:

Saturday 18 November, 1944 1730

I'm afraid that I didn't get around to writing as early as usual, but that was because I visited the clearing station this afternoon and sat and shmoozed with Johnnie Newsock. There are a few things which I forgot to mention about my trip into town. They aren't particularly important but in view of the very little news that I have to tell you I thought that I'd tell you about it, more or less to fill in space. My policy is still the same, volume in writing in order to preserve the feeling that I'm talking to you for a longer time than a short letter like a V mail gives me.

To give you an idea of the excellent cuisine at the hotel let me tell you of the following amusing incident that occurred when I had Tag there as my guest at the last meal before returning to our company. We had started off the meal with soup (they always served soups at the noon and evening meals and they were truly excellent). Our waiter was being harassed by a group of drunks at the next table, one of whom would suddenly rise from his chair and follow the waiter wherever the waiter happened to go. It was really funny, for if the waiter stopped to do something the drunken officer would practically lean on his shoulder as he watched what he was doing. Of course, doing that kind of thing was sure to result in some accidents, and it did, soup being spilled on practically all of the officers at the same table with the drunk. At any rate when the waiter brought us a tart surrounded by pineapple immediately after the soup we thought that he had forgotten that he hadn't served us the main course and was bringing us our dessert. We called this to his attention and he was as puzzled as we were. He had to go over and check with the menu to discover that he was serving us chicken pot pie. The pie portion of this was thin and flaky just like the rich pastries that the Italians make, and the pastry cook at that hotel is tops. The rolls he made for each meal (we were never served bread except as toast at breakfast) were as good as any I have ever eaten, and I've eaten some good ones.

In the hotel there were a group of USO girls who stayed there in between there shows up forward. They were very pretty girls and quite reserved, mixing very little with the officers. I wouldn't call that being snooty but rather being careful, because officers just back from the front lines can be pretty forcing with their attentions, and I'm sure would not take no for an answer. (That reminds me of a little thing I read, I believe you sent it to me: "When a lady says NO she means perhaps; when she says PERHAPS she means yes; when she says YES she is no lady.") The girls are part of the Ella Logan USO show. It seems that Ella Logan, a most attractive wench, was married to an officer who was killed in North Africa and has been giving USO shows since. The girls dress very nicely and all of them are extremely attractive girls, so that it is a pleasure just to look at them. One night as I lay in bed reading I heard some beautiful harmonizing coming up from the barroom. There was one girl's voice in the group, and there was no question but that she was one of the USO girls. It was so nice to lie there in bed and listen to good American harmony. It reminded me of lying on the sofa listening to the radio.

There is a tremendous difference in the way the Italian workmen go about doing things and the way the American workmen would do the same job. Italians go in for handwork, slowly and tediously trying to make each small piece perfect. The American workman is not as careful in his work but will make three things while the Italian makes one. The difference in the techniques of our two nations was shown very typically by the job which I mentioned to you was being done in the hotel lobby on the skylight. If you remember I mentioned that the lobby was entirely enclosed by glass and that apparently the glass of the ceiling was removed during the summer and replaced with bamboo plus some translucent, or partly translucent cloth. This kept out the rain, cut down on the brightness of the summer sun, and still left plenty of light in the lobby. Well, since winter is coming on, it was time to change back to the glass which resulted in the appearance of a skylight overhead. When I arrived on Sunday the workmen had not finished quite half of the job and when I left on Thursday they had put in only a few more of the panes. The framework was up there and all they had to do was to knock out the old hardened putty, place the proper pane in its proper place and putty it in. In the U.S. ~~the~~ can you picture a hotel taking far more than a week to do some work in a lobby? I'm sure that any leading hotel in the U.S. would have hired enough men to do the work in a morning and had the lobby all ready in a few hours. Each American would have done about three times as much work as each Italian did. They spend more time standing around and discussing this and that method of doing things than they do actually in the process of doing it. However, it helped me to pass some of my time away, watching them work.

I believe I've told you that Tag is the PX officer in our company. For some reason or other he seems to lose more money at this job than did any of the other officer who held it before

So far this month he has lost \$7.00. It isn't hard to understand why an officer can lose money on this job. If a man's bill totals \$1.16 and he doesn't have the odd penny, he loses one cent on that transaction. Multiply that by 120 and you can see that on one cent deficit he can lose more than a dollar. Then, since beer is one thing that the men will steal if they have the slightest chance, it is not uncommon to lose a case or so, so it isn't difficult to see where the PX officer ends up ~~with~~ with the loss of a few dollars. Since the army doesn't allow any overcharging of the men at the PX there is usually no way to make up such a deficit legitimately. However, I knew that most of the boys in the company are very eager to get some Xmas cards, so I gave Tag \$20 to buy some cards for the boys. He bought 100 of them at 15¢ each and in order to make up some of his loss sold them to the boys for 20¢ each. The only chance of going wrong on a deal like that was in case the boys didn't like the cards and you were stuck with them, but this didn't happen, and actually we had far less than they wanted. So now with a \$5 profit on that deal, Tag is out only \$2 on the PX, an amount that isn't enough to worry about.

If you remember, I told you that I was taking my german P 38 into town with the object of selling it to an air corps officer, if the price was large enough, and possibly buying some silverware for the money. Well, I never did get over to the air corps officers club and actually forgot all about the gun until I was on my way home. Then one of the lieutenants whom I was taking home in the ambulance told me that he had sold a P 38 while at the hotel. He had been at the bar at the hotel when an officer from the 5th Army walked up to him and asked him whether he knew where the officer could get hold of a P 38. The darned fool wouldn't admit that he wanted it as a souvenir but told the lieutenant that he was going back up to the front and wanted to carry one with him. The lieutenant told him that he had his with him and the officer eagerly offered to give him all the money he had in his pocket at the time for the gun. This, the officer said amounted to \$180. Needless to say the lieutenant went upstairs to get the gun. When he returned with it the officer was extremely crestfallen and told the lieutenant that he was sorry that he had caused him all that trouble because he found that he didn't have enough money to buy the gun. It seems that his \$180 had dwindled to \$138. The lieutenant grabbed the money saying, "If you're crazy enough to pay that much money for the gun you can have it". So both of them were quite pleased with the transaction. I think I'll carry that gun with me from now on. I certainly would like to get \$100 or more for it, for it certainly does not have that much souvenir value for me, and anyway I'm sure that I shall be able to get another one when we start pushing again.

While I was in town I tried at several places to get some carbide for a carbide lamp which I have acquired. I didn't have any luck. I think that I had better make a request for it. I imagine that it comes in one pound packages which are kept air tight. See if you can pick me up a pound of it. I believe the actual name of it is calcium carbide. It is a hard lumpy white substance which is burned in carbide lamps, i.e. the type of lamps which miners use. All that is necessary is to add water to the carbide and a gas is given off (acetylene, I believe) which burns with a brilliant white light. It will be far better than candles, which is our usual source of light.

When I returned to the company, one of the men came up to me with a postcard which he had received from a postoffice in Iowa stating that they were holding a letter for him because ~~of~~ there was 6¢ postage due. He was furious about it, and I could appreciate his feelings knowing how much mail means to us over here. He wanted to know what to do, and I suggested that he send them a 6¢ stamp and have the letter forwarded to him. However, that didn't suit his purpose, and he asked my permission to send them a money order for \$1.00 with a note accompanying it censuring them for holding on to the mail and suggesting that they use the remainder of the money order to pay for postage short mail to soldiers overseas. I told him that it was OK with me and that I would sign the censorship of it. It will be funny if the thing turns out to be some advertising.

I believe I told you about the tricks some of the goldbricks use to try to get sent back to the hospital, even if it is only for a couple of days. They'll try most any stunt if they think that they can get away with it. We had one of the extreme examples of this yesterday. As you know these boys can't get sent back if they go to their battalion surgeon because he knows them well enough to know that they are bluffing and will only send them back to duty. As a result they try to go to some other unit surgeon in the hopes that he will send them back. Last nite two soldiers stopped in our station looking for the clearing station of a naboring unit. It was quite dark and there was no question but that they would have a great deal of trouble finding it so we inquired as to their reasons for looking for it. They said that they had been up in

the front lines and had been sent back to find their aid stations and not being able to find them had continued on back looking for a medical installation. Now we are a tremendous distance from where they started out, and it was quite obvious that they had no intentions of finding any medical installation far enough forward to return them to duty at once. They were just pulling the stunt of being away from duty without the possibility of being charged with being AWOL. However, we were a bit too smart for them (their complaints were the usual vague trivial type) and had them spend the night with us and then sent them back to their units to go thru their aid station. There is no question but that theirs is a tough life, but after all it has to be done and avoiding their duty simply cannot be tolerated. If they can be caught at such an act the punishment is extremely severe.

I still have a few things to finish up with, but as you can tell by this half sheet, I am temporarily out of paper, so I'll save it and write you more tomorrow.

Chip ✓

Leo ✓

Louise ✓

Edie

Erw.

Genny

Soph