

Friday 24 November 1944 1930

Good Evening, my darling:

Here I sit in my room in the hotel, with a brilliant electric bulb for light, a radio blaring loudly down the hall, in fact with quite a few comforts of home. This hotel must have been quite a place in peacetime, as evidenced by some of the pictures I have seen of it, but now, with all its furnishings removed, except for a few bedside tables, it is just a nice place to be in without any elaborateness. We officers are sleeping on our own cots, and just as soon as I arrived in town I made arrangements for cots for our men, so that they would not have to sleep on the hard marble floors. Since this is a rest period, I intend to see that the men are as comfortable as possible and have as little interference with their good times as will be compatible with keeping them out of trouble. It didn't take some of them long to get really pie-eyed after their arrival here, and most of the company was pretty well lit the first night we were here. The second day we handed out 12 cans of beer per man, the regular PX ration, with the result that many of the men were pretty drunk the second night, and the singing in the halls was pretty loud when I finally fell asleep around 11 PM. However, they have now gotten that out of their systems, with the exception of a few of the more hardened drinkers who haven't gotten enough in them yet.

The hotel is a five story affair, the top floor being a sort of storage floor. We are living on the fourth floor, and since the elevator does not work, it means that we do a lot of climbing up and down, but I guess that won't hurt us, since we didn't do too much in the way of physical exertion while we were up at the front. The first floor has a large terrace of marble all the way along the front and one side of the building. Between the side terrace and the next building is a large garden, the soil of which has been dug up for garbage pit installation. I imagine that in peacetime the entire terrace had had tables and chairs on it and was quite attractive. The first floor has several large rooms, apparently former office rooms, which we are using for our supply rooms, while on the other side of the building is a large room which is being used by Renzi for a kitchen. Our kitchen is down in the basement but is quite nice. The back of the first floor is occupied by a large dining room, but because of a shortage of tables and chairs Renzi and I alternate on our eating schedule since ~~if~~ our two companies couldn't be seated in the dining room at the same time.

All the floors above the first floor are very much alike. When we first moved into the building the boys whom I had sent on ahead showed me the room that the officers of the previous unit on this floor had occupied, and I figured that it was the best room on the floor. However, after investigating a bit, I discovered that the men had picked the best room for themselves, a room with bath and toilet, with another room adjoining, so I decided that rank had its privileges, and moved them out of the best room and gave them the room we were in. Now John, Tag, and I are in the room with the bath, while Leip and Van are in the other room. Vince, who was with battalion headquarters for a while, has not come here and I have found out that he received a telegram that his mother, who had not been well, had died, and he is trying to make some arrangement about going home on rotation or on furlough, since his father is sick with a CA, proven by operation. Since he has been overseas longer than any of us he stands a very good chance of getting to go home. Of course they will probably not give him an emergency furlough since this is not given except in cases where the presence of the person requesting it will prove beneficial back home, but it is just possible that in view of his father's condition that his furlough might be pushed up.

For the time being our time here is our own, and after breakfast we have a roll check just to make sure that our entire company is here, and then the boys are on their own. Of course, a situation like that is too good to last for long, and we will start in our company training program Monday. This will be a headache to all of us, since all of our boys have heard these lectures so many times that they can give them themselves. However, we have our orders and we will carry them out.

Our kitchen crew has five Italian lads who have attached themselves for rations in return for doing KP. As a result about all the kitchen has to do is to cook, all of the cleaning, etc. being done by the Italian lads. At first it looked like the Italians felt that payment for this they expected us to feed their families, who also came around at meal time. Also there were considerable numbers of Italian women and children with containers to collect the remains off our mess kits before we reached the garbage pits with them, but an officer came around and told Renzi that it was against the policy of the local army authorities to permit civilians in the area, so that we now keep them out. We had quite a job enforcing this at first, for the civilians would constantly sneak back, but now we don't even allow



them on the premises, so I guess we won't be bothered from now on. To keep our floor clean we have two Italian girls who do all of the work. One of these is a very pretty lass of 17. Smart as a whip, she is, and really well built. The other is a not unattractive married girl of about 21. Her husband is a prisoner of war in the U.S. and she only got to live with him for a month before she went off to war. We had learned before hand from Capt. May, that these girls were both good girls with sales resistance sufficiently great to withstand the sales-talk of the American soldiers. Apparently this is the case, for a number of the boys have tried their best, and that amounted to permission to walk the girls home after dark, and no more. Tag has been interested in the married girl, and Macri in the 17 year old girl, but it has amounted to no more than interest on their part, because the girls are a bit too clever for them. Their job consists of cleaning up the rooms and the halls, following which they do little sewing jobs and send out our laundry for us.

So far the company has not had the opportunity of getting any showers, altho some of the men have gone to the shower unit and sweated out the line and finally gotten in. I tried it the first day and was told by one of my men that he had been waiting quite some time and that there was no sign of his getting in, so I turned back and decided that I would try it some other time. However, since then I have been too busy, with inspections, etc. so that I am still the great unwashed person. However, I have been able to live with myself for longer periods of unwashedness than this, and I think I'll be able to hold out until we get in on the shower schedule.

Leip, who had come to this town to an officers' rest hotel before the company did, showed John and me around the town yesterday. The first place he took me to was a very exclusive jewelry shop where they had the most beautiful jewelry that I have seen since I have been in Italy. They had stuff far superior to anything which I saw in Naples or Rome or even Florence. However, their prices were very high, and since I wouldn't think of paying \$120 for a necklace or \$45 for a cameo, I just looked in their windows and merely window shopped. I must admit that the necklace of matched coral was the most beautiful thing I have seen over here, and is probably worth the money they ask for it, but I never believed in putting big money into jewelry. Otherwise the shops in town don't show very much in the way of variety and the prices are quite high. In fact, this is the first time that I have seen the American soldier uninterested in shopping, but that is the case.

Yesterday I went to the CP of the division in which Abe Goldberg is a soldier. I don't know what his company is and went there to find out. I sent a message to him and enclosed it in an envelope to his adjutant general office which has a file record for each soldier in the division asking them to forward it to him. I don't know whether you remember "Big Red", but we grew up as kids in the west end of Cincy. I believe you may remember his sister, the very nice looking red headed girl. Of course, I hadn't seen him for quite a few years back in the states, but it will be quite different seeing him overhere in Italy. I hope I get to see him while I am still here in the rest center.

Talk about nice meetings. Willie Kolarik (Lover Louie) found his brother to-day. They will really get to spend a lot of time together. I am going to excuse Willie from any classes we have until his brother's unit also goes on a training schedule, so that he can spend all the time he wants with his brother. I also invited his brother to live here if he so desires. However that may not be permitted by his commanding officer.

To-nite John, Leip, and I went to see Rhapsody in Blue, the life of George Gershwin, and it really turned out to be one of the real pictures of the year. It is quite a new picture, this being its first overseas showing, or at least so the advertisement said. Despite the fact that Leip and John said that they liked it very well, nevertheless, they walked out at the end while Oscar Levant was playing the Rhapsody in Blue, just in order to beat the crowd outside. I believe that I may see it again if they don't change the other shows in town. I missed a good picture the other day, Barbara Stanwyck and Fred Mc Murry in Double Indemnity. We arrived late and had to stand on the side of the show, and I couldn't hear the sound well, so I figured that I would see it the next day, but the darned show changed the following day, so I missed out on it.

One of the boys in the company received a very interesting letter from the states. It is from a woman whom he doesn't know and was written to obtain some information from him about this woman's son who died from a basal skull fracture at the time we were at Dix. Frank, the boy who received the letter, had been picked up by some MPs for being drunk and kept in the headquarters overnight in order to sober up and then sent back to our unit the following AM.