

Good Evening, my sweet:

Thursday 25 January 1945 1900

So this is Judy's sixth birthday (also Johnny's second, that's John's youngster). How well I remember that day 6 years ago when I was sweating out the Green baby while you were in the hospital waiting for me to get there before you would let Judy come out into the world. I certainly am glad you were able to hold out (think of the excellent pictures I would have missed). What a difference that sweet thing made in our lives. And now I have to miss one of the most interesting stages in her development! It ain't fair! At that though I guess I'd better not do any kicking, because things could be an awful lot worse. Take G. Howard Wood for example. I received your V mail to-day telling me about the pneumonia of his youngster and the fact that he has a fractured hip in France. Do you know any more details about Woody. Maybe I'll get them in the letter you wrote the same day you wrote the V mail. I hope it is the result of an auto accident rather than a shell, because those compound fractures of the hip can really be nasty things. As long as all of us keep our health, relatively speaking, I guess we really have no great complaint to make. Of course, I wouldn't mind being back home coining money and taking winter vacations in Florida. I don't believe I would have the same attitude as Byers, or in fact most of the civilians back in the states. As you know, I always liked to be busy as a cockroach and didn't worry about overworking.

Time out - Leip has just returned from the city and we're shmoosing about his experiences which weren't very many. He only had to work one day and was able to run around the other three but there really is very little to do there and time hangs heavy on one's hands. Then too, the food is of poor quality and the quarters are cold. So all in all, altho he did get away from the company area, actually he wasn't as happy there as here.

With Leip away for the four days I was supposed to be the only medical officer around, which was so, but as far as medical work was concerned, there just wasn't any. We are so located down at the bottom of a hill away from the road and fairly distant from the battalion aid stations, so that we don't even bring our patients here, but take them directly to the clearing station. Actually, in the four days Leip was away I saw 3 patients, one of my men who thought his gonorrhea had returned, but his discharge stopped again before he even went to the clearing station. A second man with a mild bronchitis. The third patient being a native woman with a cast on her arm which was due to be removed, so I took it off for her. That gives you an idea of the tremendous amount of medical training that I am getting in the army. Actually it is typical of the work we do most of the time. There is no question but that there are too many doctors in a collecting company, even when we are in combat. We could easily get by with only two docs.

The youngster of the house made me almost homesick yesterday when he started in a giggling just the way Judy always did when we tickled her. It reminded me of the days when Judy was a little girl and we were so occupied in teaching her various words as we would drive along in the car pointing at haystacks, trees, barns, wheat shock, etc. Those were happy days. But after all, what doesn't remind me of those happy days, so long, long ago.

Last nite I spent my time reading another Perry Mason mystery - I guess I've read just about every one which he has written, as have practically every one of the boys who take the time to read books. Even the chaplain has taken to reading them. But then he does a lot of things which I don't consider typical of a chaplain's actions. To-day he decided to make calls back at the hospitals to see various men from the regiment who were in them. In doing this he had to pass by ~~some~~ an officers' sales store and John asked him if he would stop in to see if they had an officer's sleeping bag there. The Chaplain refused, asking, "What do you think I am, a messenger boy?" Boy did that burn us up. He doesn't do a thing all day long, of course, neither do I but after all I wouldn't refuse to stop in to get something for someone when I was passing right by the place. Actually that is one of the functions of a chaplain, to help make morale better in any way possible, even if it means running errands for those who are unable to go after the things themselves.

I got up a bit too late this morning to eat breakfast, preferring to lie in bed taking things easy rather than getting up and dressing. Of course, in this army, it is not customary to do such things. In fact, the general walked into one of the collecting companies the other day and caught Tobin still in bed rather late in the morning and raised hell about it. Of course it was easy to talk the general down on that because Tobin was the only doc on duty and since he is on duty 24 hours a day he can always alibi out that he was busy during the night. Of course, it is the height of improbability that the general would

ever come this far off the main road just to visit a medical installation, since he is chiefly interested in his fighting troops. However, he will stop in on the medics if he happens to pass by them, and he always makes it a point to stop in the clearing station.

I spent this morning looking for the letter I wrote you yesterday. Somehow or other I mislaid it and I hunted high and low through all of my stuff and still couldn't find it. I finally looked through our waste basket and sure enough there it lay covered with all sorts of junk. Believe me I was plenty glad to find it because I knew I wasn't going to rewrite another letter of equal length and I know how you enjoy long letters. I messed up my stuff so much in looking for the letter that I decided that this was as good a time to fix up my bedding roll as any, so I kept busy for the morning with that chore.

This morning Tag made some arrangement with the lady of the house to make a tomato pie. It seems that this is a very common dish back in the states in neighborhoods where there are many Italians. I had never tasted it back there, so it was an entirely new dish for me. We furnished all the makings except the flour, - tomato puree, anchovies, anchovie paste, and cheese. This is all baked on top of the regular ~~bed~~ dough and turns out quite good. We had a regular feast in the middle of the afternoon.

This afternoon Rosie, the red cross girl, visited us with a load of doughnuts. The boys in the kitchen decided to save the doughnuts until breakfast in order to save flour and bread. Leave it to the practical kitchen. Rosie is a very attractive, intelligent girl from New York, who does her job very well. She is one of three girls attached to our division. The other two are relatively new, since we had sent out our two old girls to another division when their red cross girls got sick. One of our newer girl replacements in a daughter of the famous Ty Cobb. Rosie stayed around all the rest of the afternoon, even helping serve supper. The boys kept her very well occupied, even teaching her to ski. As I've told you we are located on a hillside, which is ideal for skiing. The boys have been learning to ski, and some of them are getting quite good. There is one bad thing about the spot which they use and that is that it ends very abruptly with a twenty foot drop into a creek. So far no one has fallen in, and if they do we'll probably have to send a litter squad out to bring them back. However, most of the fellows aren't good enough to get all the way to the bottom of the hill without falling, and those that are are good enough to stop before going over the edge of the cliff.

Tag received a letter to-day from Dave Potts who is a major with 15th corps in France. He wrote that he had talked with Diefendorf over the telephone, and DD is still a captain being the medic for a field artillery battalion. I forgot to mention to you that McAtee is in the hospital again with hypertension (200/120). It looks like he may not come back, so Jones has been given the command of the clearing station, supposedly temporarily. It looks like the drinking group is now well on its way to being broken, Duncan being the only one left, and since he doesn't have anyone to drink heavily with him he doesn't go at it as he used to.

Several of my boys returned to the company from the hospital to-day, and one of them illustrates some of the foolishness of army medicine. He had gone back to the hospital solely to get arch supports for his 2nd degree pronation. We had figured that he would just go to an evacuation hospital, get the supports and come on back to the unit. However it didn't work that simply for he was gone 38 days. He told me that when he went back to the evacuation hospital they told him that they would have to send him farther back. He thought that it would be just back to the next city where there was a big general hospital. Much to his surprise he wasn't taken to this hospital at all, but instead was put on a plane and taken far away to another general hospital. There he was first placed in an eye ward, and later on in a medical ward before he finally was sent to an orthopedic ward. All in all, he was there for 6 days before he was even seen by a doctor. Then he had X-rays taken and the docs there decided that his feet were too bad for a combat soldier and suggested to him that he be reclassified. He inquired what type of work they would have him do in the rear and they told him that they could make him a ward boy in a hospital. He investigated and learned that this job entailed working 12 hours a day 7 out of 8 days, and so he told the officers that he didn't want to be reclassified but wanted to return to his outfit. He certainly doesn't have to work that long with our company except on occasion, and altho the job up here is considerably more dangerous, most of the men would prefer to take it easy most of the time despite the occasional danger. Think of it, though, 38 days for a man to get a pair of arch supports. It could only happen in the army.

Another of the men who returned to us was Rowsey, our red-headed Irish tenor. We had sent him back to have X-rays of his chest because he had had a persisitent cough over a prolonged period. Did they take an X-ray? No! They kept him for a week or so, diagnosed it as bronchitis, sent him back still with his cough and told him that they expected that he would be in the hosptial again within three weeks. That's one helluva way to practice medicine, even in the army. Gosh, it doesn't cost the doc anything, personally, to have an X-ray taken. Fortunately, on the whole, they do practice good medicine, and this is especially true in the field of surgery, so I guess, since that is the main field in war, that the doughboy has no kick coming.

Gosh, I've been writing this letter for more than three hours, sitting around and talking between sentences. So if this letter is a bit disconnected and disorganized you can understand the reason.

Tell Judy again for me that I wish her a happy birthday. I hope to write her a V mail in the morning, and also a birthday greeting for Granny Shaw.

All my love, dearest,

Walt.

Edith ✓
Genny
Chip }
Leo
Louise ✓
Lro
Soph