

Good morning, darling:

11 June 1945 Monday 0910

Well, I'm still in the villa at Belluno, although with all the changes that are occurring I have no idea how long I will be here. It seems almost superfluous to talk about the ordinary occurrences of everyday life here when things of importance are beginning to happen, but since I still want you to relive with me the incidents of each one of my days I shall continue in the usual manner.

Saturday was an extremely hot day but since it doesn't begin to get good and hot until about 11 AM and cools off pretty quickly after the sun goes down at about 8 PM, we really have no complaint to make. We received an order that everyone must take calisthenics and drill, with special emphasis on the men in the motor pool, a fact which has given the other men in the company no end of enjoyment. There has always been a bit of conflict between the motor pool and most of the rest of the company because the boys of the motor pool did not have to attend classes in the morning, since they claimed that they had to work on their vehicles. Actually they could get all of their work done in one hour if they went at it with any degree of efficiency, but since that would not suit their purpose of getting out of classes they drag out their work so that it lasts all morning at the very least. They would like me to believe that it is an all day job, but I won't consider that and make them enter into the company activities in the afternoon. Well, this is the first time that the motor pool has had to do any exercise of any sort since North Africa, where I made them enter into some of the physical exercise that we did to condition our selves for the mountain fighting that faced us in Italy. The most amusing part of all is that I had Kelly, our supply sergeant, out for it too. He hasn't done any exercising since we were in the desert, always finding something to do to excuse him from it. The company is getting a big kick out of his having to be out there with them, and we are all curiously awaiting the maneuvers that he will try to get out of it. Already this morning he was a bit late for the calisthenics because he was looking through the building to make sure that all of the men were out for calisthenics, and he got out of drill in some way. However I shall see to it that he partakes, if for no other reason than to give the men a laugh and thus keep their morale up, for goodness knows that they need something to help them in these uncertain times.

I spent the morning in the usual manner, writing your letter and then reading, this time a detective story, an English one to boot. These English detective stories never have as much action in them as do the American ones, but they do help to while away the hours. We were to have a division track meet in the afternoon, and one of our men entered his name for it. Our division invariably screws up on these events, never giving sufficient warning for any preparation. We received notice of the impending track meet the day before it was to be held which is not nearly long enough for men to prepare themselves for it. The same type of thing happened with the athletic schedule for the division, tournaments or rather leagues starting before any of the outfits had time enough to find out who their best men were in various sports, and as a result many of the teams were makeshift affairs. Because of this all leagues have been cancelled for a couple of weeks in order for them to better organize themselves. Another factor in this cancellation may be the changes which are expected to take place in the near future, something which I shall discuss later in the letter.

In the afternoon there was a choice of going to the track meet or to the lake to go swimming, and I left the choice up to Leip, for I was willing to go to either place. He preferred the track meet so I took the men swimming. It seems that there is a drive at to teach all of the men to ~~learn~~ swim, this being an achievement of paramount importance to men engaged in landing operations. The group I took out all now how to swim, so that I did not have to worry about them at all, and was able to spend my time in messing around in the water and sunning myself on shore. The day being much hotter and less windy than the last time that I was at the lake, swimming was especially pleasant. I was amused at our dog Koko. You may remember that I told you about our last trip to the lake and how we carried Koko out into the water and bathed him and then let him swim ashore. This time he didn't get within 50 yards of that water and no one could entice him any further. He was making sure that he wasn't forced into it again.



On my return to the company I learned that Atkins, the only man we had entered in the meet, had won third place in the high jump. Actually the first three contenders had tied, at 5 feet 5 inches, but one of the lieutenants had made the jump in a jump off, and the other had had less misses than Colonel in the earlier stages of the contest, so Colonel was awarded third place. This was quite an honor in that the other two lieutenants had known far enough in advance to train a bit for it, while Atkins had gone out there without any training at all, and jumped just as well as they had. Then too, Atkins has no more than high school training while both of the officers are college men. The boys are threatening to call Atkins, whose nickname is Colonel, General in honor of his good jumping. The medical battalion had one other man entered in the meet, a boy named Bartel, from D Co. and he won the three mile run after a very heady race. So we placed with each of the two men in the meet. Price had refused to enter the meet, altho he has repeatedly thrown the shot ~~put~~ more than four feet farther than the winning distance of 37 feet. I also learned that we had a volleyball game while I was gone, one of the teams which had failed to show up for its game showed up while I was away swimming, and altho our entire volleyball team was not present, the boys played them anyway. Price and KB Smith, two of our better players weren't present, but nevertheless we licked them 21-8, 21-9. That suggests that with our regular team we would have trounced them much worse. Thus we have completed our entire schedule without the loss of a single game and with the closest score to us being a 15-7 victory. The teams we have played have averaged only between 3 and 4 points per game, which suggests what a strong team we have in the company. We have met some excellent teams but none of them has been able to come closer than within 8 points of us in any game.

In the evening I attended the movie at the 337th teater, seeing The Thin Man Comes Home, not bad- a typical thin man picture with both Wm. Powell and Myrna Loy beginning to look their ages. The battalion officers were having a dance in the evening, but I decided that I didn't care to go, and it turned out that I was one of the very few officers that did not attend it. However, I haven't ever enjoyed myself particularly at a battalion dance, and I could see no good reason for going to it. I believe that the colonel didn't like my absence, but after all if I don't enjoy myself there, and it is merely a matter of watching the same group of officers going thru the same stages of getting drunk until they have to be taken home, singing the same songs and cracking the same jokes. Everyone seems to have enjoyed himself, however. The dance was arranged by Renzi, who supplied both the hall and the girls. He tells the story of his maneuvers to get the girls most amusingly. He stopped at the MP headquarters to learn if the MPs knew of any place where he might get a group of girls to come to the dance. It seems that they referred him to a store which is a hangout for the girls of the town. There he saw the proprietess who informed him that there was a girls' club in town. From her he learned the name of the president of the club and went to the place where she works. He had never met this girl before but he decided to pull a fast one. When taken to her office he rushed up to her and gushed, "Why Miss ----, it's such a pleasure to meet you again." She was puzzled and inquired where they had met before, and he told her that they had been introduced by the AMG official. She apparently must have met some American captain that way because she replied, "Why, yes, Captain, I remember now." Well, he was able to get her to promise that she would have about 25 girls for the party, and she was as good as her word. I understand that they were very attractive girls, too.

Saturday evening, Tag returned to the company from his understudying of Farrell, bringing with him a note that there was a commanders meeting on Sunday and following that a meeting of all of the officers of the battalion. Obviously something was up, and I tried to worm it out of him but I wouldn't say anything about it. Finally he decided that he might as well tell me. It seems that the battalion was going to get 12 new officers and 126 enlisted men from another outfit. These were supposed to be low point men and were to send our high point men to the other outfit to replace the men we received. Since the other outfit was the oldest one in this theater, it suggested that those men who were lucky enough to be sent to it would very likely go home in a hurry and be discharged from the army. Since I rank about third high, or even second, among the medical officers of the battalion, I had visions of leaving the company and



going to this other outfit. Believe me I was an excited fellow for the rest of Saturday and also Sunday, until the meeting was held. You can imagine the various visions that I had, of packing hurriedly, joining up with the new outfit, wondering if I would get another company or just be another medical officer, (I wouldn't care which it might be, just so it meant coming home sooner), the trip home, and from there, my sweet, only one's imagination is the limit. I really was an excited fellow from then on. In fact, that is one of the reasons that I didn't write you a regular letter yesterday. I decided to wait in the morning until we had held the meeting, so that I could tell you more of what was in the air, and then found that by the time I got back to the company and finished the book which I had gotten pretty well along in, that I didn't have the time if I was going to attend the farewell party for a couple of the officers. Well, let me tell the story chronologically.

We held our meeting at 1300 and the colonel told us that we were receiving 12 officers and 126 enlisted men from this outfit which I mentioned, but these men were high point, rather than low point men. One third of the outfit in question was being shipped out at one time, suggesting that it was being considered an excess division, and being broken up. We could expect to lose a like number of officers and men. This situation was occurring over the entire division. Well, that put a different complexion on things. It meant that we were going to lose 12 officers from the medical battalion. We didn't know how many of these would be MCs and how many MACs and we didn't know what ranks would be lost. It thus was pretty obvious that anybody could be sent out. About the safest of the group were Kirby, myself, and Leip, at least for the time being. The battalion had already received one officer with 124 points who had come to us to replace one of the young officers that had been sent to his outfit. Armstrong was already gone, as I told you, having gone to a station hospital. Pollard was up at one of our field artillery units, replacing Straus who had been shipped to a different outfit, and Hertzlich had also been sent to another one of our field artillery outfits to replace another young doc that had been shipped out. We also learned that Tobin and Nurnberg were being shipped out the next day, one to a quartermaster outfit and the other to an engineer outfit. Also that Lt. Roginsky was being shipped out to a separate medical battalion (that sounds like a good job). Well, needless to say this left plenty for discussion. Renzi, Runde, and Zeman are now the low officers with all the same number of points. Thus the axe hangs over our heads and there is a feeling of tense insecurity in the air for all of us. This news is all supposed to be kept from the men for a short time, at least until all of the replacements come in, but the news leaked out, as it always seems to do, and all the men have been sitting around and figuring out what their chances are for remaining with the outfit. Actually no one can tell them, for it may be a matter of replacing job for job, rather than lowest men, and as a result it may be that a fellow with a pretty high relative point score in the company may leave while one with a low point total may remain. Well, we all conjectured on the meaning of the tremendous influx of new men. The general conclusion seemed to be one of complete uncertainty. It suggested that we would be a surplus division when we returned to the states, and would be broken up over there and placed in other units. The big question was whether any one of us would be left with the 85th to go back to the states with it. That is something that no one can answer. It was decided that from now on we had better have a get together at the club every evening to make sure that we got a last goodbye to anyone that might have received orders during the day. So a party was arranged for yesterday evening at the club. Unfortunately it happened that we received our whiskey ration yesterday too. As a result, the officers from A company were drunk when they arrived, and when I say drunk, I mean REALLY drunk. Here we were losing three officers in one day and all of them from A company. Nurnberger was funny as he could be, talking constantly at the top of his voice, being excessively friendly, etc. Tobin, the other hand, was pugnacious in attitude, looking for a fight until he completely passed out and had to be put to bed at the club. Runde was his usual drunken self, with the horribly glazed look in his eyes that he always seems to get, and his utter failure to open his mouth. Roginsky had just returned from S. to Stresa, and had received the shocking news of his transfer quietly without getting drunk over



it. It became Eliscu's job to see that the officers got home without causing too much comment on their behavior, so he had a couple of jeeps come down from his company and take them home one at a time. Tobin was still out cold at the time that I left. I imagine that they had to get an ambulance to take him back. I don't imagine that any of them will remember his farewell party.

It was unfortunate for Tag that on this of all nights he had to get some bad news from home. He received a letter from his sister saying that his dad has a carcinoma of the bladder with metastases to the lungs. He has already lost more than 60 pounds and is in almost constant pain. Tag is trying to arrange for an emergency furlough home, since he has two brothers in the Pacific that won't be able to get home in time. I imagine that he will get it, which may be a break for him in that it might keep him from being shifted to an outfit which is going directly to the Pacific.

I was amused at a feeling of slight resentment, or more likely of envy, that Tobin and Nurnberger expressed toward our company. It seems that we have more men, or rather officers with high points than have any of the other companies. John and Gar had already gotten home, while none of the other companies had gotten to send any of their officers home, and Vince, Leip, and I were all relatively high point men. As a result we look pretty safe, here in company C, altho I imagine that I shall lose some of my officers to the other companies in the battalion if we don't hurry up and get these new officers. However, I believe that they will be here in a day or two.

Yesterday I informed Abbatiello that he should get his things ready for he is to leave us to go home for discharge on the 12th. There is one really happy boy. So far my company has lost only one man by transfer, Sheehy, which is a pretty fortunate thing in that the battalion has lost quite a few, but none of them had to come from my company. The business of pulling out these various men is going to disrupt the functioning of the battalion very much because many of our key men will be taken and it may be that we will have no trained men to replace them. Well, things will gradually straighten themselves out, as they always do in the army.

We had quite an interesting thing occur in the battalion yesterday. It seems that a number of medics from the 103rd infantry of the 7th Army stopped down to see us. They had originally been with the battalion but had been sent to the 103rd when it was being formed, and acted as the original cadre. Some reporter passed up an excellent story of the juncture of the 5th and 7th armies at the Brenner pass, because it was made between men of the 103rd and those of the 85th (339th to be exact), newspaper stories notwithstanding. It would have made an excellent tale to explain that we were the "mother" of the 103rd in that we had furnished the original cadre. I imagine that some of the men that met up there had been buddies back at Shelby. What a story an incident like that would have made.

Well, I finished another story yesterday, Image of Josephine, by Booth Tarkington. It isn't a bad story, but one can find much better ones to spend his limited time on. I have started Captain of Castile and it is extremely entertaining, being very much like a Raphael Sabatini story.

That's all for the time being, sweets.

I'll let you know what goes on.

Lov,

Walt.

Low  
Edith  
Louise  
Chip  
Gunny  
C. L.