

July 26th

Dear Ones,

Last night I went down to the office and wrote to Aunt Anne and to Uncle Lou; I also dropped a V-mail to the Thurman grandparents. I have just written a very short note to Louis Epstein I am trying to get him to write me a serious letter - all he does now is give me a resume of the baseball situation and let it go at that; I have asked him to write me of his plans for the coming year and stuff like that - but so far, no soap. Just an experiment. I spent an hour or so last night with Major McGhee; his wife - her maiden name was Groat; the Major tells me her father is editor of one of the Cincinnati papers - is starting a dancing school and the Major was drafting up a publicity stunt based on writing personal letters for the school. He had whipped up letters to sororities and fraternities, clubs and Army posts, individuals and groups and he asked me to read them over; for all his tendency to take an hour to say something that requires five minutes for a full treatment, The Major knows how to put something across when he sets himself to the job and has certain limitations. After I read them over and voiced my approval, we kibitzed around a while talking about dancing and this and that. He and I get along pretty well - I enjoy his company and I think that he respects my educational background and my youth, if nothing else. The weather lately has been rainy and as long as the sun stays hidden it is fairly comfortable - but the minute the clouds break it becomes muggy as can be.

I'm confused - is Dave Astor a Captain or not? The Dufflebag is a good substitute for Avromchick's column. (Off to lunch - be back in a while.) (We had delicious steak - good.) In writing to Aunt Anne last night I commented on the slightly rotten state of affairs in the Massachusetts state legislature which seems to be distinguishing itself by blocking progress legislation and rushing through half-baked political measure; it would seem that Maine has its share of political intrigue as well, although the state situation does not seem to have gone to the extremes of Massachusetts. Politics seem to find its way into every nook and cranny of the state administration - it seems to be a more important factor per se than it is at the National level. What is the Legion up to in Maine? The degree of intrigue and complications involved in the filling of every state job seems hardly justified by their importance. I wish that Maine (Portland) had two newspapers so that we would not be entirely dependent on Gannett who undoubtedly takes an interested stand on most of the major issues and questions. One thing is clear - the public has to come around to the recognition that you can't get good government out of an underpaid public servant who has to devote himself as much to feathering his own nest as to doing his job.

At present I owe only a letter to the Osgoods but I have no idea in the world what to write. The Santo well is just about dry - there is a limit to what you can say in describing the natives, the weather, the prospects or what have you; in two weeks I will be starting my 16th month overseas and it is the old story - I am growing more and more dependent on mail and there is less and less to write about. (I have been sitting here for about five minutes and my mind is a complete blank. There seem to be times when there is nothing either good or bad to start the wheels of interest or thought into motion. It must be the ultimate phase of our vacuum-like existence.)

We were going to play some volleyball with the New Zealanders but the rainy weather has cancelled the game. Now that we have started to close up shop it is interesting to watch the French and the natives come around to see what can be had as we get ready to leave. I don't have to tell you that there is a lot of stuff of no value to the US that would come in very handy for the native islanders; they are pretty cagey and their attitude is that if they can't get it for a song they won't do anything about it on the assumption that it will be left here anyway. That puts the army on the spot of either lowering their prices if the stuff is for sale or throwing it away when their offer is refused. It is doubtful in my mind whether it is the best policy to toss the property away or burn it rather than let the natives have it gratis. Although there is a lot to the point that these people look on us as Uncle Sugar and the element of good will is not very important since they are ready to take advantage of the situation at the drop of a hat. War is wasteful from every angle.

OK for now - all my love -