

Friday November 9th

Dear Ones,

I did not write last night - odds and ends kept me busy past 4:30 and I was just too lazy to leave my reading and come down the hill to the office. I finished Mencken's Happy Days and last night I whisked through H G Wells' short "The Time Machine." There is not much to it - a striking forerunner of modern day comic strips perhaps, with a rather novel and pessimistic view to man's eventual evolution - it is not even in the same class as Huxley's superb Brave New World. I went down to Special Service yesterday and picked out some 17 books from two new series that look pretty good - so my reading supply is well stocked again. Right now I am in the midst of a group of ornate short stories called "Seven Gothic Tales" - the first one showed more imagination and style than depth. The movie tonight is Rhapsody in Blue - I hope the rain holds off. I'm off to the officers club - some general is in and now that I am a staff officer I have to attend such nonsense. More later.

It is now after 3 - we are cleaning out the office preparatory to moving again. I went up to the club and we sat around a while waiting for the visiting brass to show up. We commented as we looked at the assembled staff of some 10 officers that there would probably be more visitors than hosts, and sure enough there were. There were two Lt. Col.s in Ordnance in the Party and we sat down together. One was the Ass't Ord Off of Mid Pac which is our headquarters at "awaii - I still haven't learned his name; he was young, cheerful, and easy to talk to. The other was an even younger, tall, towheaded kid - I mean it "kid" - who is Lt Col Beaudry the new SoPac Ord Off. That immediately made me perk up since it meant that I was getting a chance to talk to the new Base Command Ord Off before he got to his headquarters. We talked for a half-hour or so, I outlined the major difficulties remaining at this base; we agreed on what procedure I would take to initiate action to get rid of all our stuff; and they wrote everything down - some promise to me that what we talked about will not be forgotten. Then we hopped in a jeep and started out to the ammunition dump; the pouring rain did not dampen their tourist zeal. Most of us island-stuck jokers always assume that these visiting officers are more interested in the scenery and the local attractions than the Army surveys they supposedly are making. My effort was to combine the two as neatly as possible and I had no little success - even in the ammunition dump I held their attention by promising a look at a wild boar's nest! The two colonels were interested in the natives, both the Tbnk and black, in the French settlements, in the wild birds and animals, and in that bit of feminine ugliness who practices the world's oldest profession in a house near the ammo dump. The visit was a success for all concerned - in the two hours they were here they saw Santo, and for my part I got to know Beaudry and to get his ear in explanation of my difficulties - I put proper emphasis on the lack of trained personnel. (As he left Beaudry took me aside and promised to right through unofficial channels in order to keep tabs on things.) Both of colonels were good conversationalists and were ready with every sort of question about the island; their rank was no barrier as I suddenly realized when I referred to them as "you fellows!!!!" Great! Well, anyway, here is the interesting thing - the Mid Pac colonel was with a battalion which worked with the 30th Division at Blanding and Forrest and so we mentioned a few names we knew in common on that score. Even better, Beaudry is from Lexington Massachusetts, West Point Class of '40, and he went to summer camp with Pret Moses and Bobb Couri! (I restrained myself from slapping him on the back and saying "Landsman!") I guess he must be 25 or 26 - young is the only adjective for him. We shall see if the visit helps to speed things up around here. My qualms about its being a waste of a couple of hours while somebody cook-toured around were not justified. I drove them down to the airport and stood their with Colonel Spalding and Major Trosper as I left; I am becoming more and more convinced that Spalding is a rather harmless old gent, not very far from senility. It is obvious that he will let Trosper run the island.

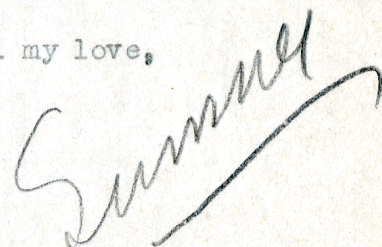
Last night I was wandering out of chow when I noticed a strange major in the lounge; he asked me what movie we had and where the theatre was. I answered his questions and sat down and started to talk with him. I noticed that his branch of service was Inspector General. He had quite a story - and he could really tell it; I know that it will sound flat when I rehash it - but he had a bunch of us in stitches for 15 minutes last night. Or

course, a great deal of its humor lies simply in the Army atmosphere and in the attitude we all have toward the Army. (I learned later that his name was "Merry", of all things, and that his reputation as a smooth "bitch-artist" was widespread.) He had 85 points but SoPac was exercising its privilege of holding men for 60 days and so he took a job as a cargo security officer in order to get out of the clutches of Noumea - he was going to Fort Dix by way of Tokyo. He told of the expression FIGMO, which is used at SoPac by an officer who is about to leave and has all of his papers and records firmly in his possession - roughly translated it mean "The hell with you I've got my orders." He has been in grade for three years and he told of how when the IG section revised its T/O his boss, a Lt-col, instead of requesting a colonelcy and a Lt colonelcy just asked for a Lt-colonelcy and a majority, so that neither of them were eligible for promotion; the explanation his superior gave was that he didn't want a colonelcy since it might mean that he would get out of the Army sooner!!! He added that he would rather get a bronze star for reducing personnel requirements - and sure enough, Major Merry reports, he did get a bronze star. The Major went on like that for some time on every question from promotions through rotation and the Army politics at base command - it was soon obvious that he was not a member of the clique that runs SoPac and is responsible for its negative, cautious, and slow policies. I commented that I thought it strange to hear such murmurings coming from an IG - for he was echoing all the complaints of junior officers all over the world and the complaints which I have written of to you many a time - and he said that the IG at SoPac has been overseas 44 months and has no desire to go home, so what can you expect there? It was very enlightening! The thing which he told us that really hit home was his report that a ship had gone stateside with 17 empty officer berths simply because SoPac would not push up their schedule even though the separation center was full of waiting officers and men. He predicted that there may be a real howl raised when the ship gets into port without its full passenger load.

Mail came in today - I think it came in on the plane carrying the general's party. I heard from Aunt Anne, Dot Fried, Mike Freedman, Joe Thompson, Milt Fishman and the Osgoods. Joe is about to be discharged, Mike is sweating out the end of the Navy medical program and his having to pay the rest of the way himself - he adds that although being married makes it tougher he is glad he is married since this circumstance would have caused him to put off his marriage indefinitely. There was also a healthy batch of mail from home covering the last days of October and through November 1st; they are predominantly clippings.

I guess the report we had of the 'effries' defeat by Frankenstein in Detroit was premature - unfortunately that of Curley's victory in Boston was not! I think I will close this letter now and start off fresh latter on in tackling the stack of mail that came in today.

All my love,



Regards to Doris -

PS - Funny your mentioning Judy Hatchfield - I got a card from Readers' Digest today telling me that she had sent me a subscription for it; she did the same thing last year as I recall - I'll have to drop her a line.