

14 November 1945

Dear Ones -

I have just seen another Republic movie and although I am too lazy to go down to the office I want to write to you to clear the cobwebs left by the movie on my mind. No mail today - but there has been no lack of excitement. The ammunition is gradually arousing interest. This afternoon the Provost Marshall (the fawning Captain Hoggatt) and Lt Stout, the Judge Advocate, went out to the area and looked around though needless to say we did not learn anything. This is the story: a third of the missing ammunition was left on a truck since it would not fit inside the locked shed. This ammunition was stolen - apparently before Thorpe left although I did not know about it until yesterday. When we checked for that ammunition a second time it was discovered that ammunition had been taken from the locked shed; the hinge had been pried off. That is all we know - we can only assume that the guards are untrustworthy and in collusion with whoever wants the ammo; it seems unlikely that all that ammo was carted out without the guard's being aware of it. (Recently other guards have been caught in stealing - in fact I am the about to be appointed the defense counsel for a boy who has admitted selling field jackets to the New Zealanders while on duty guarding them!!) There are a number of troublesome factors - the long weekend gave the stealers a lot of time, there is a French plantation inside the dump and so we have to admit some natives and their vehicles, and the guard has to leave the gate every hour to check the dump for fires (he leaves the gate locked, of course - we hope.) Tomorrow I am to take the Colonel up to look at the shed and the truck ... this is taking up a lot of my time!!

Anyhow, today we went up to the plantation inside the dump - it is hardly a plantation - the road in is nothing but mud, we had to put the jeeps into low range and four wheel drive. The owner of the area is a M. Kabar, who is currently serving a year or so in the jug at Vila, the islands' capital, for killing his third Tonk. When we arrived the area appeared deserted except for the native retainers who were building a shack and tending the chickens and the like. There was one white man in the area but he was singularly uncommunicative. Since we had the permission of the French delegate we scouted around anyway. We found no ammo - but everything else, the place looked like a second trash dump. Iron bits, canvas, army and navy odds and ends all over the place. When we finished Madame Kabar had returned to the area; she is a chubby little woman, half-Polynesian and half-French. I understand that her husband and his brother are predominantly dark. We gave her a new set of passes, but got nowhere toward finding the ammo. She was pretty clever - half in English and half in French, as a dusky child played about her legs, she said that she knew nothing of the activity in the dump; why should we ask her - didn't we have a guard?? That stumped us and we said our merci's and chugged out.

Next we went into the area whose entrance is near but not within the ammo dump. This plantation is an apeninsula formed by the snakelike twisting of the Sarakata river. The owner of the land is named Kron-



stet and his half-sister is the far-famed "Bamboo Annie." She is a slovenly New Zealand woman of perhaps 40. She has plied her trade with great success and prosperity throughout the New Hebrides and one look at her is proof of how hard up most of the fellows are in this neck of the woods - when they go to her, they have hit bottom (that may be taken literally, as well as figuratively!!) We looked over the area but again no specific luck - just a lot of mud and a lot of junk picked up around the island. We did pick up a colored sailor whom Captain Hoggatt promptly arrested for being in an off-limits area!

Quite a day - it was on the way to supper that the Colonel cornered me and made the appointment for tomorrow morning. At least I managed to squeeze in a haircut and two trips to the dentist today. The first showed that I had - hold your breath - no cavities; the second was for a cleaning. Needless to say, that made me feel good. (Did you note that Time reported that Marshall cited the duplication of hospital service on Santo as one reason for combining the supply-service branches of the various fighting branches?)

But to get back to this ammo - this thought has been running through my head, perhaps because I am on guard tomorrow night, No one has gone to the trouble of stealing 200,000 rounds of carbine ammo for a duck shoot - maybe Santo is destined to become a not-so-small scale Java. There have been reports of Tonk unrest - four Tonkinese were killed in a ruckus the other night. The French may have stolen the ammo, or it might have been the Tonks - or both. Although no Army carbines were missing at the last check there is every reason to believe that in the 30 odd months that US troops have been here the populace has had ample opportunity to secure all the carbines they might want. Whoever stole the carbine ammo knew what he wanted - even the pistol ammo was not touched. (The engineers have lost dynamite and some charges within the past weeks, too.) In any case, it seems pretty clear that there may well be some excitement here before long; the days of boredom - and sleep - may well be over. We shall see. French-Tonk friction is bound to grow stronger - by any western standard the Tonks are right as rain in their complaints over the French rule. To all extents and purposes slavery is practiced here, there are gross inequalities and cases of mistreatment. Hmm, how do you go about barricading a pyramidal tent?? or is this a laughing matter?

OK for tonight on this damned machine -

It is just after 700 on the 15th - every day is the same: get up, wash, eat, go to work, pass the noon hour on the sack, work again, shower, eat and then give up trying to find a new entertainment for the evening and wander down to the terrible movies. What a life!! -- but then, I don't know if the change such as I suggested in what I wrote last night is better or worse than the routine..

All my love,

Regards to Doris.

Sumner