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Sumner T. Beane

Dear ones -

We left "somewhere on the West Coast" for "a port somewhere on the West Coast" this morning and arrived here in time to get a look at the ship. This will probably be a pretty jumbled report and impression of a very important day in my young life. Here goes:

We marched to the boat which was to take us to the Port of Embarkation. It was a windy day, bright with the sun. Everything looked very sharply defined through my sun glasses. The gulls were soaring and banking, but flapping in vain if they tried to fly right into the wind. The water was as rough as Caser Bay on a rough day; the boat was a little larger than an Island steamer. It reminded me somewhat of home - the army atmosphere naturally denied a full impression of Portland by-the-sea.

Secrecy + security at "somewhere" is maintained to some degree in practice. Despite this we marched to the dock in full view of neighboring townspeople - it was quite a walk since we assumed we would go by train to this point. Soon we caught sight of a boat and we had



moved to the waterfront and the embarkation area. The band was there playing "Kor Kor Baby", "The Bearband Polka", and, of course, "Over There" and "Nail, Nail." (Just before we came in view of the pier we could see a flag - someone commented "There's a flag" - the retort was "what flag, the Japanese?! we've walked far enough!")

Here we were, the band moving around trying to get shelter from the wind, still playing songs like "Tiger Rag" and "String of Pearls". We walked up my first gangplank - we knew that this was only the first time - at the port we would walk up that real gangplank. This was just the preliminary. We walked under the signs telling us that the 3 branches of service equipped, trained, and protected us - now "it is up to you". Most of us were aware of this before we started this boat trip. In fact, the whole atmosphere of our crowd is marked by a lack of tension, an excellent good humor, a casual interest in the crucial things going on around us. Typical reporter: "are you excited?" "only a little, I haven't been at sea for a long time" "Well, you've been at sea all your life!" "Corny, but o.k. a good sign."

Up on the top deck we could see the embar-



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Ration of the troops. The Negroes who sang the cadence as cheerfully as they marched to the boat but then complained, as they were led to the lowest deck, "we'll always stick on the bottom." We could also look out and see the civilians watching us every move - we wondered how many had adding machines for accuracy in their reports to the sentries! At any rate we cursed the security which covered us end of the activity yet its openness to any civilian passivity. Oh, well. We need practice in security; there can never be too much of that; no real complaint - just an army guff! We still had not received mail for some 6 days.

4 cute wacs in their coveralls (filled out much better than by the ordinary G-I, naturally!) came along and I thought the boat would tip over as everyone rushed to one side. One soldier got himself a good bye kiss. They were cute all right - any guff would look fine when we think of what sort of women we may be meeting in our travels.

While we admired the excellent system used in embarkation, the band moved up for a final salute. We spotted a Major who had grabbed a ray and



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was merely tooting away. Everyone cried for a solo; he refused that and commented that we might be satisfied "since you have to be glad to have me play for you". Before we knew it, there were 3 sharp blasts and my first OI boat ride was underway.

The trip down was marked by no hijvent. I got a letter from home! one of the officers had picked it up just before signing out. I was very lucky; it was your letter of April 30. Needless to say, all the stuff about my stay in California + my visits to Friser are definitely passed. I haven't seen the Bulletin with my note to Elsie as yet - I don't even recall writing to him, maybe I did.

The only other thing on the trip was the comment by one of the boys as we watched the airplanes overhead that one of these days we might be a little more careful to check identifying features of the planes around us. How true!

and here we are on another boat - of prewar vintage, one of a commercial line. 6 of us in a room, relatively comfortable. a stop-off on the pier for Red Cross refreshments was the only break between my first boat and this, the real thing. and now you are up to date and I need a good night's sleep. That's today's story.