

16 April 1946

Dear Ones -

Everything seemed to happen yesterday. When I got to Battalion headquarters from breakfast, I learned that the Captain had come down with scarlet fever over the weekend! Then I was called by Regiment and told that I was about to be appointed athletic and recreation officer and also information and education officer. So I was hit pretty heavily all at once - it really doesn't make much difference. I don't know what any of the jobs require of me, but it is just that each is that much more of a nuisance. To top it off, the other officer in Battalion Hq, Carl Raaka, is going on leave this weekend. If I survive April, I guess I'll be all right. The days cannot pass quickly enough.

at 1:30 I came back to the barracks, washed, and changed. I caught the 3:10 to Baltimore and walked up to the Y.M.C.A. It is a fine building, perhaps 15 years old - a good physical plant and well located. I looked up the fellow on duty - he was the Y director, Ted Simmons. He arranged for me to attend a seder and then we sat and talked - he had been an Ordnance officer and had spent the entire war at Aberdeen. He seems like a nice chap - he told me something of Baltimore - there are 85,000 Jewish people in the city! The overall population is better than a million now. [It is now 8 hours since I started this letter] He added that it is a mixed community - still 50% orthodox with all the shades from the extreme to the other. The community is not as socially conscious or as educated in community life as it might be. Baltimore is a little reminiscent of Boston - too big, sprawling, not really organized & planned to be a big city. The downtown areas

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an old and dusty; there is an atmosphere of semi-chaos. The people do not have the smile, the friendly spirit that you note in the South and West. Over 300,000 of Baltimore's million people are Negroes.

anyway, Mr. Limmman called up a home on his list and made arrangements for me with a family named Marmelstein. It was a 35 minute ride to the home. Baltimore is in the midst of it westward exodus from East Baltimore and this section is now predominantly Jewish. The homes are small, they are lined up row on row in many cases; it is a neat and respectable neighborhood. I got off the streetcar and noticed a small man of about 65 waiting. Mr. Marmelstein had gone to the car to make sure I didn't get lost. As I said, Mr. M. is a small man, with all the marks of having had to work hard all his life. We walked to his home but left immediately to go to Shul. In this neighborhood there are some three synagogues plus a yeshiva! This Shul is a crowded home, small, no "upstairs" for the ladies, but the minute I entered it was as though I were at Newbury Street or Faneuil Street - the same people, the same hunched shoulders, the same looks, the same undertone of conversation, the same faces, old and young and in between, the same prayers, in the same order. That short hour made the trip to Baltimore worthwhile - I was in the right atmosphere.

We walked home and I met Mrs. M. then three daughters, two sons-in-law, and one grandson. One of the daughters was

induced during the war. Neither the men or women were attracted,
I was with a regular family in a family spirit. The meal was
excellent; we went through the Nagadats at the proper rate of
speed, and all in all the evening was pleasant and satisfying.
For all the ease and lack of pretensions I could have been at York
street - there was no place for formality or stiffness. If it
may be sociological for a moment, it was quite different from
an evening at the Sogoods, or the Rightman's, or the Dulicki-
the silvers and chinaware were ordinary, there was no social
standard to meet except the wholesome enjoyment of the holiday.
(I must say that I could not fully relax or enjoy myself for the
simple reason that I was not home - but that is not what I
am dining at.) Let me put it this way - I spent the evening
literally rubbing elbows - Too often, with my educational and
social standards, there is a tendency to overlook the other values
which may be accompanied by something less than social polish.
An occasional reminder that there are more Marmelsteins than
anything else in the world is very healthy -

It was 2 in the morning when I got on the train for
Aberdeen - I read a mystery story while waiting for it. As a
result I had only 3 hours sleep last night so I will hit the
sack early this evening. Today has been busy - I am getting
into the swing of the requirements of my three main jobs.
My plans for the weekend are vague - we shall see. We are all
anxious to see how Congressing action on the draft will affect
our training programme. I got a letter from Uncle Harold today -

I have reason to think that tomorrow a batch of old mail will catch up with me - anyway Uncle Harold must me his first letter in years. It turned out to be a plea for me to write more cheerful letters to you, Mother - if I have been tactless or too uncautious in my letters I wish that you would let me know. I'll admit that in my feeling of honesty and openness in writing to home I may sometimes be inconsiderate of your reactions to what I say. I thank Uncle Harold for his thoughtfulness, but I truly feel that he is a little over-protective - I cannot quite see the validity of being "protected" in my discussions of my Army future and my reflections on the general state of affairs.

OK for now

all my love,
Sumner

My love to Uncle Sam and Aunt Selma.