

11 December 1945

Dear Ones,

Well, here I am on Guadalcanal and I'll try to start this story from the beginning. Monday morning dawned bright and clear and I was up at 6:30 as usual and spent a couple of hours trying to collect all the loose ends so that Major Trosper would have no qualms about letting me depart. I had packed my musette bag and I sort of planned on a three to five day trip. I remembered everything - right down to a comb - and at the last minute I even remembered to bring a notebook and pencil: after all there might be some official purpose in my trip even though I still didn't know what it was. The plane was scheduled for 10 but when I pulled into the office at 9 Bob Howes told me that they wanted me out there at 9:39 - you know, the old story of hurry up so that you can wait. The plane came in about a half an hour later - and the Colonel was on it. He wanted us to take him back to HQ so he could pay his respects to Colonel Spalding and so Bob took us back after Beaudry got the pilot to wait for us in case we were late in returning. Of course when we got to the Area Spalding was not there so the Colonel saw Trosper. On the way up he had told me in answer to my questions that I was taking the trip simply because he wanted to talk to me and the plane did not stop at Santo long enough for him to cover everything which he wanted to say and it was easier for me to accompany him to the Canal than for him to waste two full days waiting for the next plane out of Santo. The plane was scheduled to return today. Beaudry's idea was for me to sit in on the conversations with the Ordnance people up here and cover what problems we have on Espiritu in the course of the discussions. Trosper was in good mood and when Beaudry said that I would be gone only one day he answered that it would be OK if I stayed a while, that I had cleaned up most of the stuff, and that there was no real rush for my return. We returned to the airport and Spalding was out there - like Trosper he talked official business for a while and then asked about me. Beaudry told him the story and his response was "That's good, we need him down here!!!" How do you like that?? With that we crawled on the plane, which had waited for us, and off we taxied. The ATC-47's are not built for comfort or for sightseeing. The interior is completely unadorned - baggage is stowed all over the place, life jackets lie around (they are yellow and have inflation hoses and mirrors and all the things you read about - in fact, if you have been reading Terry and the Pirates, I can assure you that his portrayal of the inside of a Transport is very exact.) the combination parachute-seat straps are the only thing separating the passenger from a steel bench. The ribs of the plane are in sight as are the aluminum fuselage features - you can read the various Alcoa and Reynolds trademarks still on the plates. Two litters are slung in the rear for crew members and passengers who want to rest. The entire plane is outfitted to carry litters. There are oxygen outlets and each little window has a rubber plug which can be removed for ventilation. The windows are low slung so that you have to bend forward in all sorts of uncomfortable positions when you want to look out - especially if it is during landing or taking off when you are strapped in. Beaudry was crawling all around taking pictures out of the window - I can't imagine how they will come out. The day was fine - a few white clouds in the air, little breeze, and as we waited for the takeoff signal the plane was stifling. The takeoff was smooth and before I knew it Santo was something a few thousand feet below me - we circled and were off. My sensations of flight have not changed - there is no sense of speed, and because of the fine weather the trip was calm and very much like a train ride. I settled back and started on the "Leaders Digest" while my ears got used to the height. When I stretched out and the next thing I knew it was after twelve so I must have slept for two hours. I was hungry as hell but there was no food available - the crew of course had a supply of canned food which didn't make my hunger any less annoying as



I watched them eat. I struck up an acquaintance with a couple of Navy ensigns who were going to Pearl Harbor for reassignment. Beaudry and I were the only two Army of the ten passengers. We played some rummy and hearts and one of them showed up with a candy bar and at 2 o'clock we came in sight of the Canal. It looks like Santo from the air - all you see in all directions is green - but there are no coconut plantations and there are large patches of green cleared areas. The island is very hilly and rough - the coastal strip is narrow, is not like the wide coral ledge on which our base at Santo is built. The Canal is more volcanic mud than coral and it is only recently that the muck has been licked with adequate gravel and coral dumping. The weather is just as hot, and it seems to rain just as much. There is not much choice between the two islands - of course, Army at Guadal has always been larger than at Santo. There is no large European group comparable to the French planters on Santo; there are a few British planters who control large groups of Fijian work companies which are hired out to the Army. Anyhow, we made a smooth landing on famed Henderson field - all of the other strips which we passed over are closed and like Santo's being used as storage areas where necessary. Captain Murray the local Ordnance Officer met us with a Staff Car and Beaudry went to the airport office; it soon appeared that he could not get out the next day as he desired and so we went on down to headquarters to straighten it out down there. Murray is a red-head, reserve officer, rather young, good polish, and ready to play the Army game as required; he has a lot of headaches up here and he seems to have things under control. He took us into the CO's office and it was like old times to see Colonel Howie again. He hasn't changed and after Pownall and Spalding I am convinced that he was a damn good CO as COs run on Santo. This conference lasted for a couple of hours and I just sat in on it - the Canal has infinitely more problems than we do. To all who asked the Colonel explained why I was along - Howie arranged for Beaudry to return today but it was agreed that I would leave on Thursday so that both the vacation and official parts of my visit were met. We were driven to Snob Hill where Howie and his staff live and we were given a guest hut. The colonel told me to be sure and inform everyone that my visit had an official reason - he admitted agreeing with the notion of my getting a break from Santo but he wasn't willing to sanction the trip on that basis officially. He told Murray and me that he is losing his Noumea staff very shortly - Harry Goodwin and a couple of others are due to leave on February 1st - and that we could plan on going down there after our bases close. Specifically he told me that since Santo will be closed out very shortly I can expect my orders as soon as the ammo and other odds and ends are cared for. He wants me to know the picture up here on the Canal but there is next to no possibility of my being stationed here just as there is no possibility of my being declared surplus after Santo closes - it looks as though I am fated to help in the closing of at least one more base, damn it! We went into supper at the Colonel's Mess - except for his aide-de-camp, I was the only lieutenant among several field grade officers. Howie thrives on being an island commander and he likes the responsibility of making decisions - he talks a good game and I couldn't help but feel that he is a better man for this sort of job than Spalding will ever be. Supper was superb - the mess feeds all of ten officers and there were two knives, three forks and that sort of thing - very very very - if you know what I mean. After a supper that was like a meal served in the private dining room of an excellent hotel, Beaudry had a little talk with Howie - I really enjoy all the little Army amenities and politics that come into play in all these things. Howie is an island commander and he ranks Beaudry who is the technical advisor of the higher command. Murray then took us, still in the Staff car, down the Ordnance company area where we held an informal discussion and meeting. Up to then I had met only Murray and a Captain Walker, the ammo officer. Walker was easy going, easy to talk to, and friendly as hell, southern, and he offered to be my host. (Al Laue left for the States last week I discovered when I called.) At the Ord officers club I met all the rest of the officers - I knew one of them who had been through



Santo and had stopped to see Thorpe. We talked until ten and then Baudry and I went up the hill - we talked for a while and then fell asleep. He got up at about 5:30 to take a look around before enplaning at 7. I stayed in bed and got up and ate in time to meet Walker at 7:45. I had made plans to move down into the junior officers area after that first night - as long as Baudry stayed I felt I had to be there; but I have little use for too much company of that sort - and besides the junior officers seem like a swell bunch and I wanted to be with them. They are all sweating out a trip home like the rest of the junior officers in the Army and I seemed to hit it off well with them all.

What I wanted to tell you about ~~minibank~~ was the thunderstorm last night - at about 2 in the morning I was awakened by a terrific thunderclap. Immediately after it the rain started to pour down - the thunder, the rain, and the lightening must have kept me awake for an hour or so.. without any doubt it was the most severe storm I have ever seen or heard. The thunder followed the flash very quickly - there was no time lapse - showing how close the storm was. Every moment it sounded as though the ammo dumps were going up - but no such look. It has been the topic of conversation all day.. I can't recall a single thunderstorm on Santo....

Well, I spent the day with Walker, riding around the island to look at the various Ammo dumps and in the process seeing most of the island. He is showing me how they are preparing their shipments and I am catching on to a little of the ins and outs of the problems of shipping ammunition. Col Baudry is going to send up an ammo officer and some non-coms for our shipment, but I will still be generally responsible. Walker is quite a fellow - during our talk with the Colonel down at the Ord Officers club he started to drink and apparently he really tied into the bar after we left, he had a rough night (made rougher of course by the raging storm) and everyone in the camp area was aware of his condition and kidded him about it - I was surprised that he was able to make it up the hill to pick me up. (I have really appreciated the way he has taken me under his wing - I am now writing from his tent: you can tell where I changed machines.) In taking me around Walker pointed out the various battle marks - Bloody knoll ridge, Mount Austin, hill 27, the Tenaru and Lunga rivers, the Henderson field area - as well as famous Hells Point area where a three day fire raged in an ammunition dump. Guadalcanal has had more than its share of accidents, fires and explosions and what not. I went to the cemetery and tomorrow I am going to check with the Graves Registration service as to the specific location of Luther Tibbett's grave - the cemetery is unpleasantly large, but it is neat and well kept. The plan is that it will be a national shrine as I understand it. There is a very well constructed native-type chapel in the midst of the cemetery area. (I thought that when I return I would write at some length to Doris...) Walker explained the general story of the battle for the Canal and from some of the hills in the Cruz ammo dump you get a clear view of Savo island and the famous iron bottom bay where the critical naval engagements took place. I will say that the Canal is wicked terrain for fighting - it is a series of knolls and ridges and streams and small valleys .. the open areas are very swampy. Now the island has few signs of the fighting, in fact Howie has the place well policed and it looks OK. I was a little disappointed when I learned that Al Laue had left the Island but there has been no lack of familiar faces - Chaplain Kravetz, Chaplain Morrissey, Art Barry (all from Santo) Mike Borod, Jim Winfree, and Topper (who came overseas with me. I still have a whole day tomorrow in which to run around and I plan to go up to the Hospital which used to be at Santo and whose personnel I know very well. Right now the fellows are at a movie which I had seen on Santo and I have no idea what is on the entertainment docket for tonight - these boys know how to relax: there are lots of coffee hours which everyone observes - almost every tent has an Electrolux and a hot plate - but no hot water showers! The tent I am in is right on the beach and as I write I can hear the steady lapping of the water. Tomorrow I will have to check on my return trip and make out my report so that Spalding will be convinced of the official and important nature of my visit! The Ordnance here is well organized.... and have I heard stories about Thorpe! not quite the same versions which the good major indulged - no doubt about his being a real character from the word go. Well, Thursday it will be another ride and then back to the last phase of the Santo grind ... but this has been pleasant interlude of change at any rate.



Now to comment on some of your letters which I brought along - I am counting on having a stack of mail when I return and I want to be caught up, and also I have the example of your writing from New York.... so here goes! The Uruguayan note touched on something which should have been initiated by the US. The note took key sentences from the various international agreements the American nations have made and show how they must be made to apply. "Multilateral action is called for..." "non-intervention cannot be invoked to condone violation of rules accepted by society"... internal duties have an international effect." Why Byrned gave the note only qualified support is beyond me - it sounds like the logical answer to the current Bradden dilemma and its source is a South American nation, not us. Here is another revelation of a weakness in our state department. We have passed the indefinite stage - we need definition and clarification and unity once and for all: at the present rate not only our foreign policy but entire internal policy picture as concerns military service, monetary agreements, economic policies cannot come out of a state of flux. There is no justification for the continued confusion as to what American best interest is. At least some decision has to be made to give us something to work upon in criticism, whether constructive or destructive. The Hurley gripe may be sour grapes but it creates an interesting phenomenon - on one side our foreign policy is accused of being pro-Fascist, anti-Russian, and anti-democratic; now the General labels it pro-Russian - confusion is the only thing on which the critics are agreed. Up to now I have felt that a certain amount of indefiniteness and flexibility in our degree of foreign commitments was healthy - but our current extreme is justified by neither time nor events nor world condition nor the demands of the mechanics of diplomacy. When I urge a distinctly American foreign policy I do not mean it in the Wheeler sense - I favor a maximum of commitments and the strongest possible definition of our acceptance of international responsibility as a member of the UNO and as the world's greatest democratic power.

The manifesto of the Council for Judaism raises the old question of the Jews as a political problem in Palestine. What the CforJ says in effect is that it favors the immigration of Jews into Palestine as long as it understood that there is no recognition of the Jews as a political majority with a resultant "Jewish" army and what have you. Now what you say, Daddy, is that Zionists ought to say to the CforJ and the AJC, "OK, let's not make an issue of the question of the Jewish commonwealth, we can thrash that out later. Right now let's call a meeting and all agree to place the entire body of American Jewry solidly behind the Jewish Agency and the anti-White Paper bloc." I don't think that anything that simple will work - first of all, it answers no basic question. No one is opposed to the entry of European Jews per se, they are afraid of political considerations and those will not be dispelled by such a declaration. First of all, the CforJ would probably insist on a promise that the entry of the Jews into Palestine once effected with their support would not be used for the purposes of fostering the political aspects of the question. Secondly, the Arab states will not accede to immigration requests without some parity argument and I do not think that the Zionists will agree to that. But my second major reason for opposing such a declaration, is simply that I have become a confirmed political Zionist and I think that we are as strong now as we will ever be; every factor except British imperialism is in our favor. Compromise only weakens the entire position of world Jewry... especially an ineffective compromise! I don't have to add that I still feel that the old bogeyman of double loyalty which haunts the AJC and the CforJ strikes me as an indefensible thesis, despite the fact that I recognize the uniqueness of the Jewish case. Our world is mature enough for, and our world conditions require, political Zionism - the evolution of a majority Jewish commonwealth in Palestine.

That about covers what I have noted on this slip of paper here - ok for now -

All my love,

Regards to Doris...

