

200 December 1945

Dear Ones,

Things are fairly quiet - not that there is any lack of activity, what with answering all sorts of indorsements and what have you. I finally have got pretty well caught up on my mail - I heard from Milt Fishman last night: he says that life at Noumea is pretty good - entertainment is still organized and they have softball and bridge and what have you. (If it were not for the fact that we are closing up our theatre on Xmas, we would not be getting the good movies we have been these past few nights: a reprint of the excellent Mr Deeds Goes to Town, and last night Milland in Lost Weekend @ very fine if not too cheerful.) I don't know what sort of a stage I am arriving at now - I do know that the notion of going home has actually become remote: there seems to be no more reality in that idea than there is in the idea of taking a trip to the moon. In three weeks I will have completed 20 months overseas - and sometimes it seems as though I had never been in that place called the states.. The emptiness and the restlessness of this life brings confusion- you cannot adjust yourself to nothingness.... I don't know how long they can keep us out here - the order has come through that the 50-54 point men can be released now instead of waiting until 1 January but of course it is very dubious as to whether this command will let them go: that officially makes the gap between officers and men 20 points until February 1st unless another revision comes out between now and then.. it is not being dramatic and it is not exaggerating to say that the current prospect for us poor bastards overseas is so gloomy at present that for all we are worth to anybody we might just as well not be here - the question is merely how much are we worth to ourselves?

I don't know what the hell there is to write about - something cheerful, that is - i guess I could go around being gloomy gus all day without any trouble. Old Man Spalding has turned out to be a prime character - he has little or no grasp on the problems facing this command, his mind is cluttered with piddling little things, his greatest concern is not with doing a job but with being covered on everything, his reasoning is so blocked by his Army mind that at times it seems to reflect on his honesty and integrity. Spalding is a perfect example of what is wrong with the Army system and the seniority system in particular - there is not a lieutenant on the island who could not be doing a better job than he - yet he is the ranking colonel in the South Pacific: the fact that he was stuck here on Santo to get him out of the way is evidence enough of the faults of the Army method - he should be retired to the rank of grandfather and let it go at that...

This next courtmartial is going to be a p.p.p - there are two specifications: the first is that the guard was loitering, and the second is that he abandoned his weapon. When I was reading over the charge sheet that word abandon bothered me since it suggests permanency and it is impossible to prove that the guard meant to leave his rifle aside for good - so I had a talk with Stout (he had written up the charges) and I told him that I would rather change the wording than run the risk of a long court dispute over the significance of the word abandon - we agree to change it to wrongfully put aside, and I think that that is safer and certainly infinitely easier to prove. It is surprising how much time these court martials take - this time I have only two witnesses but I want to make certain that I have their testimony more or less outlined this time.

I had better finish up this letter before 8 because I don't want to leave it lying around - all I have to do is find myself the defendant on a court martial!!!

OK for now -

All my love,

Regards to Boris

