

25 December 1945

Dear Ones,

I have been very neglectful in writing these past couple of days - things are fairly quiet especially for Xmas - a lot of little things: the best of them is that we received some seven official Xmas greetings yesterday from all the big brass - so Colonel Spalding decided that each one should be typed up (mimeod) to be distributed to the troops! That meant that the typists in the AG section lost their afternoons off - and you know what happens to those letters - no one reads them, they just get crumpled up and thrown away - sometimes I wonder. Sunday night some of the boys were a little high (I am referring to the enlisted men) and in a jeep which had a little pine tree with lights rigged on the front of it the drove around the areas, both the Officers' area and the EM's, singing carols - it was all in good fun, they were happy but nothing more. I did get a slight surprise when they rolled by my tent and someone yelled out "Hey Bernie!" I suspected and later discovered that it was Sprague - I didn't mind, but I can imagine Trosper's reaction to this revelation that the enlisted men feel no qualms in referring to me by my first name! (I should say, nickname, I guess.) Monday we cleaned up some odds and ends in the morning - I packed a box with my radio and some books and a lot of odds and ends to fill it up; I have it all banded and marked and I will mail it tomorrow - it will probably take some time for it to get home. My tent is pretty well stripped - I tore out the desk and a number of odds and ends that Jerry left and it looks pretty bare: I don't want to be burdened with a big police up job during those hectic last weeks. Incidentally, we are getting ship cancellations and delays right and left and my off hand guess would be that February 15th would be a safer guess than any other as to the date that we will leave here - as one of the boys said last night, we may be here for Washington's Birthday, you can't tell. Yesterday afternoon I took a couple of cases of beer up to the CB's - the Navy has trouble getting beer, the Army supply is unlimited. I have become pretty friendly with Tom Warapius and the other officers of the CB Special detachment, the "Special" means that they are a stevedore outfit. They are a good bunch and I don't have to tell you how important it is to be friendly with the people who load our ships for us. I spent an hour or so up there - playing ping-pong, listening to records, and picking up a bottle of Canadian whiskey so that I would at least have something to fall back on during this festive week. I spent the rest of the afternoon with Sprague and Rauth just kidding around and shooting the breeze and I split the liquor with them - of course that is strictly illegal, but what the hell - I thought it was the least I could do since I had the stuff and was not going to drink it and since they have such a hell of problem trying to get hold of anything stronger than 3.2 beer. Both of them have discretion and I had no worries on that concern - later in the evening I did run into Sprague and he was feeling rather good - my few drops were obviously not his only source of supply; he is a funny kid (he is some five months younger than I, I guess) he seems very delicate and he is, and when he is "one of the boys" he just looks a little incongruous - my own opinion is that the Army upset him before he had hit upon any set of values and he has not been able to settle down into one that satisfies him, so he just swings along with the crowd that seems to be having the most fun. He is a good kid and he is a good worker, but he just doesn't seem to ring true every now and then.

Anyhow, up to last night my Xmas weekend had been nothing but movies and a game of cribbage or two with Bob Howes. Our club is all decked out with the scrub pine that grows around here and cotton batten is used to simulate the snow! The only thing I could think of was the impression that a cheap store gives when its Xmas decorations seem completely artificial. The Xmas spirit just isn't there in any way shape or manner. Bob and I came in after the movie and the Colonel was sitting there with his apple polishing cronies, Lewis and Hoggatt. Trosper came in but he is strictly a coca-cola man and I'll wager that he just picked up a magazine and shortly tramped backed to his tent and to bed. It was really pathetic - except for us a couple of stragglers there was no one there - I guess that the Colonel was expecting the Xmas doings to center around him - that must be Army custom - and he must have interpreted the emptiness of the club as a snub at him, which it was. Then Bob left and I got into my jeep - I went down to navy but apparently the boys were out celebrating with the men for I couldn't locate them; the entire island was quiet and I mean quiet, it might just have well have been any night in the week. So I shot back to the Port Company where Al Horvath and Doug Wright had told me that they were holding a little shindig. I got there around ten

and found that almost everyone was there - Silvia and Powell (Engineers) Murray and Stout (Claims settlement) Rosey (Postal) Horvath and Wright (Port) Pitz and Stotler (QM) and me and assorted dogs. It was the largest single gathering on the island without a doubt. Hell, that roster includes better than 50% of all the Army officers here! (Incidentally, there were ten of us there and there were 8 jeeps parked in the area - at least no one walks on Santo!!) We were there from ten until after 1 - I had a couple of drinks (Silvia failed again in his efforts to get me polluted - everyone knows that I never take more than a drink or two and then only on rare occasions and Sil swears that if he ever sees me get the slightest bit shaky he will write to all the Portland papers, since it will be a news event!!) They had fried chicken and eggs and bread (they being the port and QM boys who live together in the port area.) It was a pleasant evening and one which I enjoy occasionally - we talked about everything from why New Englanders do not pronounce the letter "r" when it appears in a word but insist on tacking it on when it doesn't - as in "idea." - to sex; we ate all the chicken and eggs and drank up a good proportion of the liquor and champagne - everything was extremely cheerful and quiet - their wasn't even enough enthusiasm in a holiday sense to rouse us to sing a carol at midnight. The most exciting thing that happened was a dogfight between Stotler's belligerent pup and Wright's dog - and it was not voluntary, we irked the dogs into it and it never did get beyond the growling stage... but one of them lunged by my chair and that was enough to make me move in a hurry.

I slept until ten this morning - around six I was awakened by a shuffling noise outside my tent - I recognized somebody standing in my doorway - it was one of the company detail men. He said "Where's Captain Hoggatt?" and he wandered into the tent - he was dirty, unshaven, and quiet obviously still on a bender - he continued "That bastard has me on KP - the dirty, etc.. Wait till I get that guy, I'll bash his head in"... he went on for a while and I was too sleepy to do anything but wave him in the general direction of the door; I did not feel like being a party in the demise of the good Captain by pointing out his specific tent to this character. He left and I went back to sleep.. the next time I was awakened was by Captain H himself but this time it was 10 O'clock and he was obviously alive and well and in his best fawning, pinging manner. I was informed that the Colonel was having punch served in the club at 11 for everyone and that I should put in an appearance, huh -ha. I got up and shaved but then fell back on the sack - then at 11 I decided to come down and write to you so here it is at quarter to 12 and maybe I had better go up to the club now.. I'll finish this later. I managed to read through almost all of your clippings from the last batch - so this note will probably turn out to be several pages long. I also discovered that I never mailed the letter I wrote Sunday - this envelope will probably need extra postage...

It is now after lunch and in order that you may understand the spirit and the spirits with which the remainder of this letter are written I will explain that the punch was extremely smooth, that it packed a terrific punch, and that I had five glasses of it - off hand I would estimate that I have more liquor in me right now than I have had for many a moon. Everyone else is feeling equally joyous and the meal was quite pleasant - we had a full Xmas spread and both the food and diners were well enough spiced to make it entirely enjoyable. Witticisms and bright remarks flowed like the punch and in direct proportion to it and the climax came when Charlie Fontanay told a story. It is the story of a little boy who sees a cat with a mouse resting between its paws - he asks the mouse if he is happy there and the mouse answers "Yes" (here Charlie pitched his voice into falsetto); he then asked the little mouse if it were happy there and not afraid of the cat - again "Yes" in the falsetto; the little boy then asks the mouse if he has anything else to say, "Yes" is the answer in falsetto, the little boy asks "What?" and in a deep booming voice, the answer comes, "Get me out of here!!" And Charlie really boomed it and everyone in the mess hall stopped and turned to face him - of course they only heard the last line which made it all the more funny, especially to us - the timing was perfect and I am quite sure that it had the desired affect on Colonel Spalding and his little body of wilful men! By the way, I checked around and I find that all of us unsuitably forgot to wish the Colonel greetings for the day - he can not fail to catch the predominant attitude of his officers. Now it is raining - I just got down here in time - Charlie Everitt and Bob Howes have some champagne that we will finish off tonight and that will probably be the official close of Xmas for me - I'll need a shower and all the sleep I can get tonight.

There is one unhappy note here in the command - Leo Siedel received a radio giving him an

emergency furlough because of the illness of his father - that's is a hell of a way to get home - I'd rather stay overseas a million years than go home that way. There is a slight awkwardness in the fact that the rest of us are pretty gay while he is way down in the dumps. He has no other information other than the radio. There are three priorities on emergency leaves - the first says that you will get home within 10 days, the second between 11-20 days, and the third over 20 days - his is the middle one, so he feels that although the situation is serious it is not as critical as it might - you clutch at any little indication in a spot like this....it is an awfully tough break. It is also unfortunate for Bob Howes since Leo was being broken in as his replacement and now it looks as though Bob will still be held until the last minute... great war.

Funny thing - I was thinking about this last night - my attitude toward Xmas has certainly changed since those days when I wouldn't sing carols and what have you. I admit that an Army command overseas and in the condition which this one is in is hardly a good criterion but the average fellow does not attach any religious significance to the holiday as far as I can see - the good time philosophy of the holiday is at least predominant over here. However I will say that I am glad that as a child I was made aware of the fact that Xmas had much more than a good time significance. (Boy is it pluchering right now!) It is only as you grow older that you see Xmas in the light that older people see it, of course, and for parents to allow their children (Jewish families are my subject at this point) to ignore the religious nature of Xmas and to observe the holiday is to make a serious error in my judgment. It is a funny thing - I am in an adult society now - and I am constantly struck by the fact that no one thinks of me in terms of my being Jewish; I have noticed this a number of times - one of them was when a Jewess was chosen as Miss America: I forget what the conversation was but I do recall my impression from it. To the mature mind my joining in Xmas celebration means nothing - in a child's society, it would have meant everything. Now I am extremely conscious of my Jewishness - I look Jewish, and I am proud of my being a Jew and I never make any bones about it - yet I realize more and more than within the frame of my Judaism there is no barrier to my complete adjustment to the surroundings in which I find myself. Just being Jewish and understanding what it means in terms of the simple things that have public significance like the observation of holidays is in no sense a problem - my being a Jew is a thread of my life that is woven into all the fabrics of all my activities and all my desires and plans as a member of the American society and as a member of the world community - and in no mature and important facet can I find any conflict caused by that thread. The important aspect to note is that in childhood that thread must be developed and protected so that its significance is clear so that it can become a constructive feature and as a result in its development it does not always fit as easily into the scheme of things as it does later on... I hope what I am trying to say in this little Xmas paragraph is not too muddled - what I mean, I guess, is that as I look around, or as I look forward or back, I feel a sense of satisfaction that the values which you have imparted to me, Mother and Daddy, have revealed excellent judgment and balance and that I have the opportunity now that I am more or less on my own in their development to build with a wonderful foundation and supply of building materials....

Well, let's see where I am - three pages and except for Charlie Fontana's little story no mention of my gripes about not getting home - and so far my typing has remained legible - not drifting off into meaningless combinations of letters as Mark Twain once did in his humorous news story covering the opening of a tavern where free liquor was dispensed. I am determined to fulfil my filial duties and finish this letter despite the fact that my head seems to want to fall onto my shoulder and that it is only 2 in the afternoon - after all this letter has to make up for several which I have not written in the past couple of days (which brings me back to where I started and for fear of being terribly repetitious and writing this whole letter all over again, I will hit upon this place as the logical spot to say OK for now -

All my love.

Regards to Doris

