

Somewhere in New Guinea
20 April 1944

Darling,

Although I received "big mail" today I still am not satisfied. I got four or five copies of the Enterprise, the latest dated March 11. Of course I enjoyed them, but I didn't get a letter from you—it takes that to make a perfect day.

Also I received a big batch of magazines for the company—a story about these "morale lifting" magazines was in the March 2 Enterprise. We got three weeks issues of Life, two each Time and Newsweek, one Collier's, and some Detective and movie magazines—a very good assortment for all tastes. Also (there was only one copy so it must have been intended for the company commander) there was Esquire, in adless overseas size. Verry nice!

Anyway I've plenty of reading material now. I had already started a new book last night—C.S. Forester's "Beat to Quarters." My new bed was so comfortable, however, that I didn't read very much.

I was riding down the road this afternoon when I noticed something familiar about an officer in another jeep we were passing. I looked closer and who do you think it was? Fred Bradshaw, big as life, with his ~~magnificent~~ colonel's eagles shining on his cap. He looked just ~~like~~ like he always did and was the same old Fred. Commenting on his promotion he said "they finally had to do something, kick me upstairs or kick me out." Since I've been down here I've heard lots about his work so I know he well deserved the promotion.

We've had our first near-real taste of the war during the past week but nothing has come of it. One night I was sitting in my tent writing letters when Paul Hudson came in and wanted to borrow my gun. "A squad of Japs was sighted about a mile away at dusk," he explained all out of breath, and he wanted to give the gun to a guard. I told him that if the Japs were that close I'd just better keep the gun—but of course let him have it, for I'd rather have an armed guard outside my tent than ~~have~~ a Jap inside. Of course, as rumors fly, there was talk of a paratroop Jap landing at a nearby airstrip before morning. Most of us took the incident as a joke, naturally, and attributed the tale of the "squad" to some scared soldier going home alone in the semi-darkness. But, the next night we were alerted again, being told a native had reported seeing four armed Japs in the jungle nearby. Again the guards were doubled and again we slept peacefully, thinking nothing of it.

Saturday night the colonel and I decided to run down to an infantry outfit several miles away and "shoot the bull" awhile with its colonel. We bounced merrily down the road. There was little traffic and the frogs were loudly predicting rain. Sure enough a cloudburst came and we finally turned back to camp wet as rats. When we got in Morel said "the Japs are wandering about again" and we laughed and went to bed for another good night's repose. Next morning, however, the MP's came by and told us that three armed Japs had been captured the night before walking along a road—the very road over which the colonel and I had taken our damp spin.

Well, that's the only "war incident" I've been able to dig up so far—and the funny part of it is I'm still sleeping peacefully at night—as is everybody else. It's hard to realize a war is actually going on sometimes, we get so complacent—just as, from the papers, I can tell the general public at home is complacent, too. Of course everyone who has someone in the service realizes the seriousness of war, to some extent. But, I'm afraid neither you nor I yet realize the full meaning of the word. Personally, of course, I'm perfectly happy to go home minus any hero decorations. I'm just an armchair infantryman anyway.

You may be interested to know how I felt about writing about the "big Jap incident" of our section of New Guinea. I didn't want to worry you needlessly—but I've decided it wouldn't worry you. I'm not worried and see nothing to worry about. Then, too, I didn't think the censor would pass the story. One of the base censors came out to see us this morning, however, and enlightened us considerably on what we could write about and what not. As for this little story he said, "Why, everybody knows there's ~~in~~ Japs in New Guinea—whatthehell do the folks at home think we're here for if not because of that. Sure, go ahead and write about it." I think his talk did more to relieve certain tension than anything that could be done. Being new at this censorship game, we've naturally been hesitant about writing—some of the boys were still afraid to say more than that they were well and that sort of thing—afraid they would do the wrong thing. But, as the censor explained, the only purpose of censorship is to avoid the possibility of a slip that might give aid or comfort to the enemy. (If the same censor reads all my mail, however, I think he'll agree that I've managed to put down a lot of wordage on paper, despite the restrictions.) I would like you to tell me, ~~now~~ ~~anyhow~~, whether deletions have been made in my letters—that may help me to keep in line.

Did you ever get the letters I wrote enroute? I'm sure they must have been held up until after our arrival here, but I surely hope they were finally mailed. When you get them you'll know I was thinking of you during that wonderful South Seas cruise—that voyage I only want to make once more—going in the opposite direction.

Here's a couple of gags I thought were good:

Said one little can of paint to another little can of paint:
"I think I'm a little pigment."

Put a papa duck and a mama duck and five baby ducks into a box and shake them well—what do you have?

A box of quackers.

Which reminds me the biggest joke of New Guinea has come off with the razor—my handlebars. I'm almost human again.

Lots of love and goodnight,

