

New Guinea

29 Mar 44

My Darling,

I've neglected writing for a couple days now, so will try to catch up on the news. We're working hard yet, but the work has brought results as I'll tell you later.

Yesterday Paul Morel and Wyman and I wandered off down a jungle train—we picked up a native who patted himself on the chest and said "me hosipital—sick. Sick pinis." That meant that he had just been released from the native hospital which is operated near here. He gave us a cocoanut which he evidently was carrying in case he got thirsty. Further down the trail we found some natives gathering coconuts—we all are tired of them now—and we got a couple of boys to get us some bananas. In a few minutes they came trotting back with two large "stems" covered with bananas—small and green. The boy said "hangem up in house you. Bye em bye one week eat. Godd." So that is just what we did—hung them up in my sunnly shack with an old shirt wrapped around them to keep them dark, and in about a week we should have bananas and cream—either canned or dehydrated—with our oatmeal and sidemeat.

Last night I was all in—tired and irritable and the colonel dropped in and began telling me what he wanted done today, so I flew off the handle a bit and told him I thought the boys needed a rest—they weren't even getting time to do their laundry, which is most necessary here. I suggested that we give the boys at least a half day off as we've been working hard every day including Sunday since we landed. He didn't seem to agree with me, but today at 11 o'clock he called a battalion formation and made a little talk in which he told the men what a good job they have done. Then he announced that we would have this afternoon off and trucks would carry the men to points of interest nearby. Also they would have Saturday afternoon off and tonight and Saturday nights trucks are carrying the men to USO shows and prizefights. On Saturday



there will be a big horserace not too far away and we expect to send a recreational convoy there. So, I reckon it's a good thing the old man dropped in on me when I was so tired.

We have almost completed a large chapel-rec hall and we have mess tables and large mess halls--really huge tents, so the men don't have to sit on the ground to eat any more. We have shower baths under construction water coming from a well we dug in our own back yard. All in all, we're getting quite comfortable--and the war doesn't look too bad from our present point of view. Of course we never know when we'll give up these luxuries and take off into some jungle--not too soon I hope.

I got a taste this afternoon of what it would be fighting in the jungle. Paul and I drove up to an old battle area and slashed our way about a half mile off the road to an old Jap emplacement. Foxholes were everywhere and rotting bits of Jap equipment was strewn about. To get through the undergrowth we had to use a machete and we were near pooped when we finally gave up and came out. Never before could I realize why the fights in this area seemed to go so slowly as we read about them in the States. An outfit that can advance 100 yards against the Japs and the jungles has done a good day's work, I'm convinced.

Today I met an old friend of Royce's. He's Captain Presley Horton, of Louisville, Miss., and was in the same class with Royce at State College. He asked me to come down to his outfit's "beach club" some night and open a cocoanut--which I think I'll gladly do. I dropped by the club--of course it's just a shack like all our other buildings--and had a couple ice-cold cups of pineapple juice--mighty fine and my second iced drink since coming here. I'm trying to get hold of an Electrolux kerosene refrigerator to keep my biologicals in, so there's some hope that the ice situation will be alleviated some anyway.

I saw a very famous battle ground today also but I don't think I can say which one. Nor do I think I'd better describe the battle damage, etc. I'll tell you about it "after", I hope.

I received a letter from Andrew today--dated Feb 25 in the Gilbert Islands, Central Pacific area. He was okay and said he had been on three missions. He gave me several friends' addresses in San Francisco, thinking I was coming through there. I'll just save the letter & look them up some other time--soon I hope. Gotta close. loads of love

