

Native
shield



UNITED STATES ARMY

Somewhere in New Guinea
3 April 1944

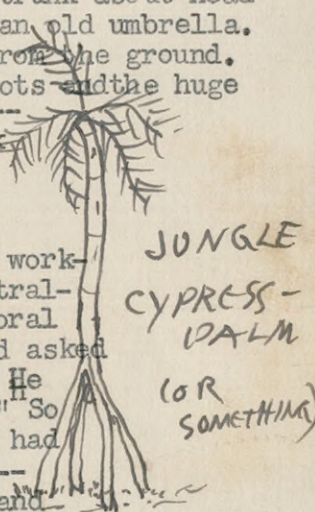
Dearest Inez,

My mail situation is improving--thank goodness. I've gotten letters from both you and Mamma up into March. So I feel much better.

I wrote you yesterday that Paul Morel and Paul Hudson and I were going for a little tour in the mountains. It was quite an interesting experience. Following up a tortuous trail (in the jeep of course) we came upon an abandoned American air forces camp--built upon such an inaccessible ridge that I wonder how they ever did it. The country here is beautiful--when you get away from the Kunai grass flats with their sultry heat and climb up the rocky ridges. The most fantastic plants in the world grow here--I know none of their names yet and can hardly describe them. One kind of palm tree has almost peculiar formation. The roots grow out of the trunk about head high and spread out into the ground kind of like the ribs of an old umbrella. The trunk itself stops off abruptly about two or three feet from the ground. The wood is very soft. With my knife I slashed a couple of roots and the huge tree came tumbling down. There were many birds flying about--large pigeons, white, red, black; and parrots and a big black bird about the size of a large rooster which is black as the ace of spades and caws sort of like a crow. We saw no other animal life except a few small lizards.

Going up a mountain trail we came upon a native workers' village--called "Angau compounds." The Angau means Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit. There was an Aussie corporal sitting beside the road sketching the village. We stopped and asked him about the countryside and he admired our guns very much. He invited us to come up to his camp with him and "shoot a bit." So he got his submachine gun and we with our automatic carbines had quite a time shooting tins--I'm picking up the Aussie slang--I mean tin cans. We admired his sub gun and he admired ours and we got along famously. I found I could hit about as accurately with his gun as with mine. Looking over the Corporal's art work--his name is Lee and he used to work on a Brisbane newspaper as staff artist--he mentioned that he sometimes painted portraits so Morel asked him to paint him. The water color job turned out very well--in fact, I'm inclined to believe the boy was an excellent artist, as much as I know about art. He said he usually got "a couple quid" (pounds) for his water color portraits but Morel was so well pleased that he gave him three. Lee told me if I wouldn't shave off my mustache--and you should see it now--it's ready to curl like handlebars--that he would paint me next Sunday.

We were "warned against" the Aussies when we first came here--told they were beggars and petty thieves, and that they would hold us up for trinkets. Well, we've found quite the opposite to be true. Those I've met are a fine lot of fellows. Only ones I know are non-coms who I have happened upon, but they seem very intelligent and most appreciative of the American soldiers. One sergeant whom I gave some old packing crates a week or so ago, came by the other day to tell me that he was leaving soon for Australia. He brought along a dozen cans of fruit juice as a gift and invited us to visit his family in Sydney--which I'll do I hope. It's true that the Aussies don't have many things the American army has--their camps look like gypsy camps, ragged and sprawling along the sides of mountain cliffs, and littered like no Dixie div camp ever could be. They don't have many vehicles--a few Aussie made Chevrolet trucks (right-side steering of course) and what few jeeps they have been able to wangle from the Yanks. Whereas we are now screening our mess halls with





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very little screen wire, it's true and lots of burlap—I've yet to see even a screened kitchen in an Aussie camp. We already have electric lights in our dispensary and recreation hall—from a portable generator—and we have a number of gasoline and kerosene lanterns, but the Aussies apparently either enjoy the darkness at night or burn candles. Although their camps are unattractive as I have said, the Aussies themselves are very neat. They apparently have only one uniform which they wear on fatigue and for dress too. It's dark green trousers and khaki shirt—with their big hat in day and a tam at night off duty. They always wear "gaitors"—short leggings.

Last night Morel and I went down to the "officers' beach club" of a nearby base. They served iced fruit juices and sandwiches—no charge, just "feed the kitty." While there we enjoyed listening to some interesting stories by a captain from a parachute battalion which captured an air strip near Lae. His name is Terry and he's from South Carolina—"married a Georgia gal and went into business in Alabama, so I reckon you'd call me a died in the wool Rebel," he said.

I had a nice swim during our usual two and a half hours rest period this noon and spent the afternoon helping the chaplain haul in a lot of palm thatching which which we're going to build a chapel. Before supper I had a nice shower in our "communal" baths and I'm about ready for bed now—it's 7:30 and Morel and Dexter are already in bed. As usual I'm tired nearly to exhaustion, but feel fine. It's cool after a very hot day.

Honey, I'm telling you as much about our life here as possible so you can get a true picture of life as we live it—there's absolutely nothing to worry about and although we know the future will bring some changes, we're enjoying our stay here very much. I'm so grateful you all have been well and I pray you will continue so. Tell Carolyn that I'll answer her letter very soon—and I think she is doing swell. I'm very disappointed you never received the letters I mailed to you enroute—none of the folks seem to have gotten them and I suppose they are lying on some docks somewhere. I think Gene is doing fine by taking the job and am sure he will make a success at it. Yesterday I completed bracelets for Nan and Sue and I will send them, along with one each for you and Carol as soon as I can possibly get down to the postoffice. I'm making Gene a nameplate bracelet out of a "Balboa" dollar and a piece of aluminum from a Jap plane. Will send it soon, too.

Write me often and remember I love you very much and miss you more than ever.

Kisses,

Q



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