

Matsuyama, Shikoku, Japan
November 10, 1945.

Dear Mallye,

This is going to be just about the last letter you get from me. It isn't that I am that close to leaving for home. Rather it is that I hate to be complaining all the time and for the life of me I can't seem to keep it out of my letters any more. I'll try to limit the amount in this letter but I make no promises. My primary complaint is a common one over here, the slowness of the demobilization program. But I shall go into that later.

Our boat ride up to Japan was uneventful, punctuated three times daily by decent food (a rarity in the Army). During the last few days it was a bit rough but not rough enough for me to forego any of my meals. (Me, who used to toy with food). The only work I had on the trip was a little pencil pushing when I helped out on the daily sick call. Otherwise, my time was spent reading and playing cribbage and pinochle.

We first saw Japan on the 21st of October and pulled into anchorage that evening. From what I saw of the mountains that come straight down to the sea I could readily understand why the Japs were so anxious to conquer other lands. What they have is not so extra special. We landed on the following day in the same manner as we would have landed for combat. For the first time in history, Budin got off a boat without getting wet up to his you know what. And when we landed we didn't even have to march the ten or fifteen miles we had figured on. We were put on trains and taken to the city or rather, what was left of it. The Japs all looked scared and did more damn bowing and saluting than you could shake a stick at. And you never saw so many policemen in all your born days. There was one every place you looked.

As soon as we got to our area, three of us from the office took off on a reconnaissance. Within fifteen minutes we were seated in the home of a Japanese drinking tea and trying to make ourselves understood. His entire family was present. The kids are cute. There was one little girl about four, dressed in a kimona. The coloring in her cheeks was exquisite. There was a faint pink showing thru the skin. I winked at her and she tried to wink back. Her best effort was closing of both eyes in a squint. You see, an American soldier can't stay mad at people very long. So, I gave her a chocolate bar. I don't remember ever seeing a child become so happy. I gave the Jap a cigarette and I think he enjoyed it more than the kid enjoyed her chocolate if such is possible. He told us that the city had been warned before the raid and that, as a result, only about a hundred civilians were killed. We took off to look over the damage caused by the raid.

The devastation here is terrific. Prior to landing reports were that 60 percent of the city was leveled. I'm still looking for the 40 percent that was supposed to be left. What the B-29s did to this city with one firebomb raid shouldn't happen to a dog. I have seen towns destroyed during our previous campaigns but never anything like this. Every bit of vegetation was destroyed. For miles there isn't a thing standing, not even a tree. The place is flat and littered with broken tiles from the roofs of the buildings which burnt in the fires. I know that they didn't deserve any better and that the raids shortened the war considerably but it seems just too horrible that such things must be done. And mind you, this was just a firebomb raid, not the real thing, the atomic bomb raid. The latter just leaves dust, not rubble. And, I thought, this could have happened to my home town, approximately the same size and population as this one. I hope such a thing can never again happen. It would mean suicide for any nations and all nations.

Of all places to run into a fellow, I ran into Dave Barsky right here in my office the other day. I haven't seen him in years. The son-of-a-gun is a Captain in the Vet Corps assigned to 10th Corps Headquarters and has been with them since Leyte. We have been within a few miles of each other for ten months and didn't even know it. I have been in his office on many occasions and never got a glimpse of him or a mention of the name. He said that his sister Jenny got my address from Nettie and sent it on to him. It was swell to see the guy and we spent the entire evening together talking about all of you and then some. I intend to take a run over to Corps one of these days if I can finagle a pass. They are about three hours by boat from here. Dave looks just about the same. The only change is the grey hair around the ears. On him it looks good; me, I'm not so sure. We are about the same age. I guess nothing could make me look distinguished, folks. I'll always look like a little boy.

And now to my favorite pastime. We have another word for it here but it is an illegitimate word and I could never use it in a letter. The subject - why don't they get us home. The Army can find more excuses to delay our return than a little. If it isn't typhoons, mines, lack of shipping or not enough disposition centers they can always fall back on strikes as an excuse. I'm waiting for them to blame it on a Communist plot hatched in Moscow. Such a reason wouldn't surprise me any more. The 35 year oldsters were made eligible at the beginning of September; no provisions made for them as yet. The 70 pointers were eligible October 1st. As of the present date only those with 76 or more have left the Division. The 60 pointers (I have 66) became eligible on November 1st. I hope to be on my way home by the end of the year. However, I am not being optimistic and am not counting on it. After you have been in the Army a time you get to the point where you don't believe anything until it actually happens. They just don't believe in keeping their promises. If I get home for New Years it will be a miracle. Will somebody please convince me that this is the age for miracles?

Chaplain Jolt from Corps came in this morning and I spent a few hours chewing the fat with him. We compared notes on our adventures since leaving Mindanao. He complains too. He has the grand total of 38 points and wants to be home for Passover. That will be a miracle. He has done a swell job since coming to Corps. He flew all over the Island of Mindanao to service troops in isolated areas and did enough flying to get the Air Medal. That is quite a bit of flying for a Chaplain in the Infantry. I shall see him frequently now since he says he will be coming over here once a week.

At long last we are getting some fresh foods. Dave Barsky warned me of the coming since he is the Corps Food Inspector. The "C" rations were beginning to get us down. There should be fresh meats and other foods daily from now on. Even though I shall not be here long enough to enjoy the full benefits accorded the enlisted man in the peace time army, at least the boys who have to remain will have it a bit easier.

That is the story up to now. Keep you fingers crossed for me, folks. Perhaps you might see me before 1946.

*You should be cutting down on your letters
by now.*

As ever,