

Mindanao
7 September 1945

Dear ~~XXXX~~, Mollye, (A letter to you wouldn't sound right starting
any other way)

Here it is, all about my trip to Leyte. I left a week ago Sunday and flew up by C-47. It was quite an experience, flying in one of those box cars. For the first time in two years I experienced cold weather. That was when we hit the high altitudes. My ears felt just as tho I had taken a ride in the elevator to the top of the Empire State building. Strange as it may seem, I didn't get the airsickness they talk about. It only took a few hours to make the run. When we came in sight of Leyte Gulf, you could see ships, ships and ships. There were little ones, medium ones, big ones, cargo ships, passenger ships, warships, in fact, every kind you could imagine. From the air it seemed they were so closely packed into anchorage that a rowboat couldn't get between them.

When I arrived I put in a call to Sam Silver's office. He wasn't there but Marvin Zolt, his assistant sent a jeep after me. And so I had really arrived. Sam came in about five in the afternoon, nodding and saying "hello". It was the perfect double-take. He walked about two steps, turned around, looked again and then made a leap for me. He hadn't been expecting me for another few days. By the time we got thru hugging each other and trying to get a word in edge wise on each other it was time for chow. He took me over to the mess hall where I was introduced to Duke Freidman, a former Broadway restaurant owner now in charge of the officers mess at Base. From then on I had my meals there. That night we sat around and talked. Of course I showed him all the latest pictures I have of family and he commented favorably (he better had). A chaplain came over to visit Sam that evening and we all slept at Sam's quarters. In fact, there was a visitor almost every day I was there. It reminded me of a fireman's convention.

The following afternoon we went swimming from General MacArthur's former private beach. I had purchased a nifty pair of bathing trunks at the PX. It was quite an experience for me to go bathing in trunks once more. That evening we went over to an island used by the Navy as a seaplane base. Those fellows live the life of "Reilly". Real buildings with all the conveniences of home. We had dinner there which put Army fare to shame. We then proceeded to the chapel which was the nicest I have seen in the service. Sam conducted and gave an agreeable performance. His assisant did the chanting. The boy has an excellent voice. There was a fair attendance, considering the small number of men on the island. We returned the same way we came, by speed boat, loaned by the Naval Base Commander. It was a lot of fun riding along at about fifty miles per hour, especially on the return trip what with the clear starry night and the ships all aglow now that the war is over. One of the officers who arranged to have the services presented us with a case of Coca Cola which we promptly tore into when we got back to camp.

I spent the next few days travelling around with Sam and Marvin. We visited Tacloban a few times and made stops at other nearby places. They have picture shows every night and we saw a few of them. And they were pretty good ones and new. Here, at Division, we get the pictures after GHQ, Army, Base and Corps have had their turn. Nice to the fighting men, aren't they? Nights we spent chewing the fattill at least one in the morning. It was the first time I had seen Sam since last January and we could unburden ourselves with the thoughts that otherwise we didn't reveal. It was a vacation for us both, even if Sam was on the go all day and most of the evening. He is a very conscientious fellow and has too little consideration for himself. I have seen very few men go out of their way as he does to try to help the soldiers. He not only believes in his religion, better, he makes an honest attempt to practice it and succeeds admirably.

By Thursday it was getting time for me to think about returning to my outfit. I made arrangements to take a plane back the following morning. We talked until about two that morning, I got up at four and started for the airstrip. We took off at six and about an hour later we were back to this island at the Corps area, which is a half hour's flight from Division. The transport plane wasn't going to my outfit so I called Chaplain Jolt who drove down and picked me up. We made arrangements for me to get a ride by a cub plane the next morning.

The first person I ran into at lunch was Ed Goodwin, a boy with whom I took basic training. We also came overseas together. He took me in tow. We played ping pong, cribbage, went swimming in their beautiful pool, took showers in a regular building with concrete floors, saw a movie in a regular theatre and, all in all spent a swell day. Goody put me up for the night at his quarters. Incidentally, I had to use three blankets. Their area is on a high plateau and it almost drops to freezing at night.

I went over to the cub strip the next morning bright and early and was told that planes couldn't get thru because of the weather. I waited around all day without success. Sunday it was the same story, Monday it happened again. In the meantime I was having a nice time over at Corps. On Tuesday one of the pilots said that he was willing to chance it and we came thru. And now, like MacArthur, I have returned.

Censorship has just been lifted and I could really write a book about this stinking Army and its inefficiency and stupidity and fascism but it wouldn't do any good at this stage of the game. I would prefer to voice any opinions after I am out of it. I certainly hope that it is very soon. I wanna go home. The news on demobilization sounds pretty good. The point score has been lowered as has the age. Now it shouldn't be long before they again lower the age to 32 and the point score accordingly. Either way, by points or age, I figure on starting home by February or March at the latest.

Well, there it is, all the events of the past few weeks. More a little later on. Now I have to bear down and catch up on my work.

I think you owe me a letter now, or do you? How is everything progressing at the Y with the new director in charge? Thanks for sending me that last edition via air mail. Remind me to give you a great big kiss when I get back; I'm sure Etta wont mind. Many of the boys back home now? I'm glad that they won't have to come over to this theatre. Gosh, the war ending surprised us almost as much as it did you. Say "hello" around for me, will you?

As ever,

Ed