

New Guinea
March 30, 1945
Good Friday
6:30P.M. – or
1830

Subject: Divers Observations, Comments and Narration to the World's Best & Sweetest Person

To: Katherine Kavanaugh Molloy Latham, Lutheran Ave, Eden 5: Texas

1. Reference letter your headquarters, subject, miscellaneous comment, dated 19 March 1945 - - -
Well I ran out of soap on the start of this military letter, so I shall drop back into the softer style that is civilian

First I wish to state that I am in excellent humor and spirits. In fact, for not special reason, I am bubbling over with good cheer. So, my dear Kavanaugh, be at ease, and sit back to read a long letter.

Lou is away and I am again commanding the company temporarily. There are only three of us in the quarters; Ford is looking up some data about our trees over here. I had asked him about them so that I could answer your question. I had thought that they were all a variety of gum but he says not

I have had a cold for about two weeks and have coughed rather up – roarily at night for the past week. I went to the dispensary for some cough medicine and divided that now would be a good time to have my chest x-rayed. So yesterday morning I had it done as a General Hospital, and learned that results this afternoon – My lungs are perfectly clear and healthy in every respect. To quote the diagnostics – “Examination in the [illegible] position shows a normal diaphragm with clear cast – [illegible] sinuses. The heart and upper [illegible] are normal in size, contour & position. The lung fields are well aerated with no parenchymal infiltration demonstrable” – I hardly ever think about my lungs, but while waiting for the x-ray I said a few prayers. I even imagined myself getting thinner & examined my appetite in retrospect. Much as Mr. Milky Toast would do – Felt pretty good when I got the diagnosis (or rather x-ray reading) this afternoon and I said a prayer of Thanksgiving. Tonight I ate a steak supper that would do justice to demand Jim Brady & John L. Sullivan. You need not worry about my cough or cold – they have been epidemic [sic] around here of late & mine are better despite my nightmares I think I am pretty healthy person – I have more energy than the average person, and a better than average appetite. In the nearly three months since my return from Australia, I have had only three nightmares, and none of them were bad ones.

Your letter of the 19th was an exceptionally good one, and your comment on the contrast between Catholic & Protestant terminology was very true. I am sure that no man overseas receives as interesting letters as are the ones I receive from you. And I mean that literally – I always want to comment on different things in them and Lou is always very kind about listening with interest which I think is genuine.

A Jewish officer named Justin Krusman from Pittsburg is staying with us. Wednesday night I attended the Passover Feast with him and enjoyed it, and you would have too. There must have been around 600 Jews present. I imagine about 70% of them were from Brooklyn. All the Jewish chatter & wisecracks comprised quite a volume of sound. The meal followed a ritual of Jewish

prayers which were said in Jewish [sic] – a Private with a superb voice – Private Israil, sang a number of Jewish Hymns, which by the way, are rather beautiful. Jewish words, although when considered singly are harsh, when sung, are unbelievably soft: The hymns sound like soft lullabys, in a sort of plaintive beat (I wonder if that could be, in part, the product of their dolorous history). Then people were seated at each tble, and two quarts of wine were place on each table. The wine was drunk after appropriate prayers throughout the ritual. For food there was hard boiled eggs, canned chicken, peas, pickles, cordial and unleavened called “Matzah” – which as you know was the break carried by the Jews on their escape from bondage in Egypt. It looked like crackers & had a pleasantly neutral taste. The Haggadah of Passover is a combination religious ceremony and plain thanksgiving. Traditional foods at the feast are the Paschal Lamb (now symbolized by a roasted shank bone of lamb) unleavened bread & bitter herbs of which the latter is supposed to represent the [illegible] of their return and a roasted egg as a reminder of the additional festival offering (Hagigah). Jay is the keynote of the Feast & Traditional pranks are played; before the matzah is eaten, the youngest member present is supposed to steal a piece of it from the one presiding. The latter must feign surprise & then look for it – Traditional questions asked are : How different is this night from all other nights? On all other nights we eat leavened or unleavened bread. On all other nights we eat herbs on any kind; on this night only bitter herbs – etc. There the Rabbi of the family head presiding over the feast give the answers from History.

One favorite hymn (is maybe just a song), and which is supposed to usher forth lots of merriment called “Echad Mi Yodea” a question is asked – thirteen of them in all, & the one singing or reciting the answers is supposed to do so in one breath – for instance the first question. Who knows one? Answer, I know one. One alone our God is in Heaven & on earth – who knows two? Answer, I know two, Two are Sinai’s tablets, but one alone our God is, in Heave & on earth – The answers become correspondingly longer & the 13th is quite long.

Another song is “Had Gadya” “only one kid, only one kid one and only kid, one only kid my father bought for two [illegible]

There came the cat that ate the kid that my father bought for two [illegible]

There came the dog that ate the cat that ate the kid – etc.

This continues for 7 more paragraphs each one eating the last – The kid represents the Jewish people. The cat some notion which subjected them – finally something represents Grace & another Rome & another the Nation States of Europe – all supplanting the previous one.

The crowd was so obstreperous that the Chaplain kept reminding them that the feast was primarily a religious service. They laughed & chattered throughout the prayers & hymns.

There were lot of Jewish WAACs present – all chewing gum wildly

I ate of the food & partook of the wine & tried to hum along on the hymns – all in all twas an interesting evening.

In writing about the advent, I have a guide book to refer to; otherwise I would not have remembered the names of the hymns.

As I write, the Allies in western Europe are doing a bit of broken field running toward Berlin – By the time this reaches you the show may be over. I have an unthankful mind. Instead of revealing on the European victories, I start puzzling as to its affect on the ward end here. When the war is over here, I shall start worrying about Law school & after.

Here are the names of the trees – Arecaceae from wood (which must be the wood that dominated as Mahogany in an earlier letter). Mangrove (I think that is the [illegible] rooted trees which grow in swamps; Saga Palms (from which we made the flour the natives eat – mentioned in Pitcairn Island), Nipa Palm (from which comes the thatching on native huts) and [illegible] (I don't know it). Ford insists that an oak grows over here, but I think the tall trees in the [illegible] were a species of [illegible].

Mother don't worry of my participating in a China Coast Invasion or Islands near here. We might eventually get to China, but I imagine that it will be several months after initial landings are made. Still not confirmation of Jap reports that w have landed on the [illegible] Islands. We couldn't have tried & failed because the Japs would have gloated over that which they haven't. Back to a China coast landing – any landing we might make will I imagine be a small scale deal, Much on the order of our previous and only one.

This is a hot night – uncomfortably so. I wish I had a cigar to smoke

We received a number of Armed Service Edition Books today. Among them are: “Der Fuehrer, Hitler's Rise to Power”, “Such Interesting People”, by a newspaper reporter, “Larrish Hundred” a novel by Beverly Giddings, “Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea [illegible] David Cooperfield” [illegible phrase], “while we still live” by Helen MacInnis and “Piere Marguette Te French Missionary”

Am looking forward to the Peppers & sauce: Mother I wish you would please send the following: (Postmaster Please note)

4 jars of peppers

4 bottles of pepper sauce

6 bottles of pickles

12 cans of sardines

6 jars of olives

4 pounds of pecan

The Postmaster can check these off as you send them bit by bit. The peppers are wonderful.

Mother I wonder if one can buy a pretty nice Victrola nowadays & records. I would like to buy you a good one for Christmas. I wish you would write somewhere & find out about their price and availability. If one could be procured (I think we would get one before Christmas) you could be building up a stack of records. If the deal is possible I shall not consider your saying no about it because my mind is made up that you shall have one; if we don't or can't buy it now I shall buy it at the first opportunity so the same amount of money will be involved either way.

Well ma writin' hand is a getting tard so I shall close – in you I worship and adore & tis you I shall be seeing in too many months have fled:

Loving son

J Harrod

Don't worry about my cold; it is just the kind everyone has – I am not underweight. Smith has a cold too.