

The Philippines
16th day of May
1945

My darling Mama Kate:

Drip – drip – drip goes the rain on my tent – grr – grr goes the trucks on the muddy roads – chirp – chirp go to the chickens in the gulch back of my tent. Tis about an hour past supper as I sit to write you a long, long letter.

First, let me say that I am in a wonderful mood as I write – for no especial reason my heart feels gay – I am in a resounding good humor. For one thing, for the first time since I've been here I am not tired & sleepy. The whole evening is before me as there are no big shipments or receipts tonight – I had better knowck on wood there; because one might pop up.

Today brought two good letters from you. Gosh your letters are wonderful. I enjoyed reading the lines from David Copperfield. I recalled each one, and the particular part of the book it appeared except the one about [illegible]. And your comment on the churches leniency towards the fallen contrasted with the rigidity of its lows is certainly a new & well expressed thought. Never have you written a boring letter to me – the saneness of your letters – I once referred to it one thing I like about them – They are you – and they are never not you.

Your letter were dated May 4th & May 6th. Neither of them indicated directly that you had heard from me, and I was somewhat disappointed that you hadn't – Lou's [illegible] in a letter postmarked May 4th stated that they had heard from him, and I received a letter from Jenny Ruth saying she had received a letter I had written at sea, which I mailed the second day after my arrival here, the same time I mailed two letter to you announcing my arrival plan the balance of "at sea" letters.

We have been very busy indeed, and I have been pretty snappish with our men, but not too much so. I am enjoying my work immensely, and handling it rather well. Next to Lou I am in charge of the Depot – (our Colonel in higher headquarters prefers not to call it a dump - The line of delineation being, according to him, that a dump is a supply installation set up and maintained by a division or lower unit, while a Depot is maintained by a larger tactical headquarters, or U.S.A.S.O.S. – We are under Corps). I am responsible for the Depot records & Ammo reports, and am also in charge of the actual work in the Depot & the shipping & receiving. Balling, of course, has the say so on all principal matters & receives orders from the higher ups.

I wish you could see our depot. It is about 300 yards from the beach, and is situated on very slightly sloping terrain. It forms a rectangular shape – being about 600 yards long and 500 yards wide. Roads leading from the beach borer the two long sides – on the opposite side of one of these roads lies a coconut plantation (about 40 acres in size) coconut palms border the road. Situated in this plantation is the quartermaster dump or depot – also on the opposite side of this road is a large two story house, or office building which is being used by the qm as its headquarters. A sign still hangs above one of the doors, reading: Serviano – ABOGADO – Notary Publico on our side of this driveway are two fairly small houses which are now partly torn down. Both are two storied & both have the toilet, which is the same as an outdoor toilet – On the second story, the road at the top or farthest inland part of the depot connect the two side roads and extends on one side to headquarters and to a distant town & on the

other to out past a stream into the wilderness. The other side road is literally smothered by some farm of oak trees – large & round topped & stately ones which were obviously planted. This ride, as I said comes up from the beach; at its beginning is a fort tower, still intact & what I guess was an ammo magazine. In the lower right center of the depot is a grove of palms – There must be fifteen [illegible] there, and extending upwards a hundred years, lies our company area – four rows of pyramidal tents – 29 in all - & supply building & kitchen, mess. Hall & orderly room. The officers tent are on one side of the bivouac & seated on the [illegible] of a small valley which runs through the depot & which has small, shallow stream running through it. Back of our camping area toward the beach is one of the ammo bays comprising an area of 150yds by 50 yds all types of ammo are to be found I nit & part of the types are mixed. Bays extend all along the palm side of the depot and are about a half to a third the size of the one above the mentioned. A winding road, built for us by the engineers cuts the depot in halves situated on the edge of this road near the palm side * about twenty yards from the upper end of our company area is our depot office built for us out of prefabricated lumber by the engineers building about twenty feet by thirty five feet in size. Bays extend all along the upper road & true boarded road & are also found in the center of the dump on either side of the road. In the upper left center, there is an old concrete swimming pool – a fairly good stream of water flows into it & we bathe there in the evening (I only take a bath about every third night here – took one nightly in Guinea) – near this pool and extending up to the upper left hand corner in a grove of trees – about five or six – They furnished lots of shade & we park our jeeps under there in the afternoon & look out over all the depots like lords and also out into the bay whose wave tips, lit up by the sun, look like acres of diamonds. The breeze off the bay plus the shade makes the spot as pleasant a one as nature could [illegible] anywhere. Along the lower left hand corner, the dump area is presently occupied by a Duck company, but they are to move out presently and we are to utilize the space for boys – we built our own culvert across the stream and it is a pretty good one – and so Kavanaugh, is our depot layout – a fairly compact and convenient place; much different from our roadside boys at a PO 565 which string out for two or three miles there is no danger of the depot being bombed as there are no Japanese planes around to bomb it – I don't think one has been sighted throughout the whole operation so far.

I mentioned in my last letter to you about our having a company of Filipino guerillas work for us. They have just come down out of the hills or mountains after a 3 year stay during Jap occupation. They were at one time actively organized under the Guerilla set up, but were [illegible] partly when they come down. They form a provisional company now of about a 140 men – 90 of which we get daily – we divide them into squads of 8 men each which includes their NCO in charge – we put one of our men with each squad & they perform all types of work in the depot – segregating, restaking – loading & unloading – digging drainage ditches & [illegible]. In contrast to Filipino civilians they are quick to learn, eager & able workers.

A combat unit which had been providing us with guards for our depot, moved forward so we placed a number of our Guerilla on guard.

I just returned from posting them before I began this letter. They are clothed in rags, and looked small & lonely or I put them out of the jeep at their respective posts. They were extremely proud of the carbines we provided them with and saluted me constantly. It was beginning to rain and I told them they could stay under Ammo sheds while it rained.

I rode out on a duck into the bay with a squad of them today & dumped ammo – they were delightful with the ride – poor devils I thought of how – two years ago they would have given their right arms for the small arms ammo – which we were dumping.

A first lieutenant from their company comes down daily & checks on them. He speaks good English; is 35 years old & is good looking. He has been in the Filipino army for 8 years & was stationed at this particular place at the outbreak of the war & was quartered in one of the two houses I mentioned previously in this letter. He said that part of our depot area had been a parade ground – that he had swam in the pool I mentioned – that he knew the lawyer who sign I mentioned above (He said he supposed the lawyer had not yet come down from the hills). He said that this was a wonderful place in peacetime – dancing pavilions, when the army gone dances with music furnished by army bands – picnics on the beach; baseball games with the American's Navy stationed the owner of the large plantation which I mentioned having seen in a previous letter. The owner is very wealthy & owns plantations in all the islands; he is now in Manilla.

While standing in front of the depot office today two Filipino Majors worked by – one was G4 of this Filipino military district – The other was head of the districts quartermaster dept. – we stood and talked for about half an hour & they told several interesting tales about life under Jap occupation. One of them had been stationed here at the outbreak of the war & had retreated & finally was part of a farce, including 3 American Generals, which surrendered to the Japs. He remained in a concentration camp for 6 months or so & finally got out by appearing to be a collaborator of the Japs. He was assigned by the Jap army to farm group of spies [illegible] sympathetic Filipinos to spy on the guerillas on spies, and made out their report for them which he submitted to the Japanese. In the meantime He kept the guerilla informed of Jap movements. Eventually he left the Japs altogether & a price of 30,000 Jap pesos was placed on his head. He told interestingly of receiving supplies from two American submarines during Jap occupation. The submarine emerged or rather surfaces, at a cave only about 5 kilometers from a Jap outpost – The Guerillas he was among unloaded the guns & Ammo – machine guns, rifles, one 75mm howitzer by means of the small bark canoes The Filipinos have. He told of the Japanese period of Emperor worship just before [illegible] each morning – told of knowing several kind & human & intelligent Jap officers and of the inevitable stupidity of most high ranking Jap officers – of how in general on this island, their treatment of the Filipino women wasn't particularly bad of how just before the American landing on Leyte, the Japanese on this island, were thrown into a state of confusion & rush troops aimlessly back & forth across the island – of how the Jap officers said the 3 best fighting peoples in the world were the Japanese, Chinese, Germans – of how they never mentioned our Victories in New Guinea but always spoke of our high naval losses around Guinea; of how a few months ago a number of Japanese on an air field in this island saw a group of American planes flying overhead & thinking they were Jap planes waves & clapped their hands gleefully, only to be mowed down by our swaying & staffing – of how the Guerillas listened to the Philippine hour from Brisbane – of how the Guerilla spent lots of their time going on food hunting expeditions – I listened with annoyed interest – I could listen to them for hours.

You mentioned tow cities – I am not near either of them – of the two, the smaller one is, they say (American officers who have recently come from there) is by far the prettier. Many Spaniards live there, the other larger place was "Little Tokyo" before the war as nearly all of the Japanese Civilians on this island lived there & near there: I may get to go to the larger one eventually, but not any time soon.

Tomorrow I go by water to a place where two of our men are supervising the loading of Ammo aboard planes for shipment to the front. I shall leave at 830 and be back by one pm so it is a short trip & perfectly safe.

Well mother dear, I think I shall close and read "Pageant of the Popes". There is one person whom I love – because that person is so good & certainly nearest to an angel.

I adore you

Your loving son,

John M. Harrod

P.S. – I am eating ravenously & food is good, although the two chickens which I've had for tonight supper were as tough as rubber – Soon having no nightmares at all – Love and I went to Mass & communion last night

J. Harrod