

COPY

April 25th, 1945.
25th Div. on Luzon.

Dear Bob & Linnetta:-

Suppose by this time you think that I've about forgotten how to write; it may be more truth than poetry though. Believe it or not but our battalion has been committed to the front line ever since I last wrote and brother that's a long time no matter how you look at it. While the first was rough and fast, the second rugged physically, but not too rough on us, the past month has been one to remember; I never was so ~~downed~~ glad to get off a damned hill in my life. To begin with you know where our division is but you can never imagine the terrain. The mountains go straight up with deep ravines along both sides- wooded to beat hell and full of tropical bamboo, vines, stickers, monkeys and Japs. They always held the high ground while we fought uphill so you can imagine the results- Jap artillery, direct fire and indirect as well as their mortars were zeroed into spots we must take and because of the tall trees the shells burst in the air- tree bursts they are called and they're really rugged. While formerly we felt and were secure in fox holes, this past month the holes were from 2 to 4 feet down with heavy tops of wood with dirt piled 2 feet thick on top or covered with sand bags. Lucky for us that Jap shells are lousy and they have many duds, 'cause there's not a damn thing wrong with their accuracy. One day I was leaning against a tree, heard the gun, and the next second actually saw a Jap 90 mm mortar shell just as it landed some 15 yards away. Their shells have a high concussion but don't fragment with the lethal power of ours, so the shrapnel bothered none of our group. We got so that a guy rustling a poncho sounding like a shell dropping in, everybody would dive for a fox-hole/

Our aid stations, one forward, 35 yards from the front on our initial attacks, and one to the rear, were things of beauty. One dug in 2 feet deep with 4 or 5 feet of sand bags above the ground, heavy logs over the top then sand bags piled on top; the other dug in and with a heavy top- in these we worked on casualties.

The Japs as usual had their tenacious suicidal stands not even giving an inch when tanks were brought up and put direct artillery fire into their holes and tunnels only 25 to 50 feet away- Rice, clothing and pieces of Japs were blown high in the air, but still the Japs in the nest hole would fire. Flame throwers would put fire in one hole and the smoke would emerge 30 feet away out of another hole. Tunnels, escape holes all dug deep into the soldiers precious friend, old mother earth, with pill boxes each supporting the other with paths of fire, abounded each knob or hill while the ravines were fit places for the stinkers to roam & hide. We fought up, our regiment that is, to 4500 feet over country no white man had ever set foot on. The engineers built a road which is nothing short of marvelous. Some times grades of 40 to 55 degrees had to be ascended. Over this road rumbled our tanks- thank God- that was the one thing the Japs had not counted on- to see a tank on top of a mountain would be kind of unheard of by any other army, I guess. But with the tank and the ever present doughboys, we reached our objective- that is our battalion objective and were relieved yesterday.

I guess to you people a soldier is a soldier whether he be air corps, quartermaster or infantry which I guess in the broad angle is true. To me there is one major element and all the rest are supporting- it's the infantry that does it- the GI Joe that's scared to death and yet knows that he must go on patrols, that digs a fox hole on his knees, with 2 or 3 men covering him, as he claws his way into the life saving earth- the guy who sleeps one or two hours, then pulls guard for a long lonely ~~weird~~ weird hour, then the next day makes a push with the same thing repeated, sniper bullets going clean through steel helmets has but little effect on most of them- guess we had 8 to ten last month- they grin and say "guess I was pretty lucky that time".

One thing good my laundry list for the past four weeks consisted of 1 fatigue suit & 2 pairsof socks- cheap hey- I shaved twice, which is just 2 times more than the infantry- no bath since Easter. I'm not trying to impress you with how hard a life I lead- I'm as safe as I want to be, except of course for lucky artillery, as I can stay back with the rear aid station if I want to. It's the infantry that takes the beating

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hit it off so well, so she left. She went down to 103 pounds but is now back to 118 and feeling good. Don't believe I'll write her unless I get hard up for something to do.

All of your letters are inconsistent in their arrival and consequently get some dated in April while only a couple in March. I can make out that Tant had some sort of heart attack but is getting better. I hope and pray that she and Unk remain in good health, as of course all of you.

I guess I'm about written out for awhile but will write again soon. I'm going to hit the cot now- last night was the first since January 10th that we've been on a cot- Love to Mr. Oehler & all.

Paul