



ENGINEER TOPO COMPANY

The Philippines

6 May, 1945

Dear Frank,

Your long awaited for letter arrived about a week ago via my home, New Guinea and two addresses in the Philippines. I say "long awaited for" because in March Mother wrote that ^{she} had forwarded one from you and it was quite a while before it came — in fact I still get an occasional letter written in February to New Guinea. Your letter may have been old, but I was damn glad to hear from you. The last I had heard was that you had flown to England last fall.

I left that fabulous land where the streets are paved and there are white women who don't chew tobacco, in the middle of December. We crossed the equator on Christmas Day — what a lousy, hot, sunny Christmas that was — and in time arrived in New Guinea. A month of hell in a replacement depot; then another 21 day ocean voyage to this island. Another replacement depot for a few days and then I found myself assigned to this outfit, and here I have remained ever since.

I am a pressman's helper, which means I am supposed to help a guy run an offset press. Having had approximately 5 weeks training in a trade that in civilian life takes from 2 to 5 years to learn, I was appallingly ignorant at the first. However, my boss, Moe, is an apt teacher and I was interested, so I learned fast. At present I'm able to do my share of the work, but I am still learning, and fast!

That I was damned lucky to get into this outfit is an understatement. For we were the first large group of replacements to hit this island and our subsequent assignment was a veritable grab bag. Buddies of mine who had the same spec number ended up in the combat engineers, medics, light + heavy ponton ~~and~~ companies and various kinds of construction outfits. Here I am 1/4 Irish, yet I have the luck of the full blooded Irish.



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No, Frank, I didn't stop in that bar on S. Cross St in Denver. But I sure remember that night — it was New Years Eve. But my brother, Bill, is now in Denver at Lowry field and I've already written him about it. I could say "What babe?" but that'd make me a liar; and besides I've been doing my best to live & up to that nice-to-be-forgotten-remark but my early training cramps my style and keeps me somewhat on the gentle side. Also I bet that you ^{forget that you} and the Irish tenor are bosom buddies — you were the only two that knew the words to "The Bald-headed End of the Broom."

Right now my pal, "X Happy" (he of the sharp wit and feeble pool cue), is trying to lure me into a game of cribbage so he can take the remainder of my hard earned pesos away from me. He says, "You don't have to write your buddy now. Even if you don't write him for a year, he'll still be your buddy. It's different with your girl."

And speaking of my girl lets use the past tense. Janne or George McCohan, whichever alias you prefer (remember that night in the S.A.), no longer is the object of my passion. Our romantic relations have deteriorated to the point of disintegration, we are now just friends. And there's no broken heart at this end (for my heart is back in the same place yours is, in a place called home). Nevertheless something might happen, you know Fiddle JB.

As you know, corresponding is not my strong point. But I'm sure going to write Ed & Davy. Ed's idea of a trip to Davy's is damn good, for we're all going have a hell of a time settling down in one spot when we get home and a trip like that would help. That'd probably be the only way we'd ever get to see Davy, which we all want to do. I doubt if we'll be able to interest Pete in it though, but one can never tell about Peter Nolan.

Thinking of those guys just brought this thought into my addled brain. How would you like to walk into Ed's house with a camera and catch him pressing a pleat in his undershorts! Remember the first time we saw him at Raleigh he was pressing his pants. Boy, Frank, won't it be great when we three get together again! Ed'll probably be a drinking man again so it ought to be quite a binge.



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It is now Monday night; I ran fresh out of words last night so had to quit. Thereupon I returned to the exciting perusal of "The Return of Tarzan." What trash, but pleasant reading for an escapist like myself.

The news from Europe today is still swell; it looks like the Nazis are about to take the count. Also today brought the news that 2 million D. Is will be discharged this year. Frank, I hope that means you and our brothers (Joe + Bill), at least you ought to get a fuolough. Here I go dreaming again, but if you do, my love to Peg. She's a nice gal; the four of us fitted together like tailored pajamas (what are pajamas?)

Two years ago I would have been ashamed to admit this, but now I'm rather proud of it in a peculiar sort of way. On one of my boat rides — the first — I received thru the Red Cross an anthology of poetry, from Chaucer to Sandberg, all English + American "greats" are represented. And that book has been more than a constant companion, I've read and reread most of it a dozen times or more. Amazing, Frank, but each time I read, I get more pleasure. In a word, poetry seems to 'satisfy' me in some way. Am I in love, or am I growing in mind, or should I go out and count coconuts to relieve the strain?

I've a chance to lose a few more pesos in a poker game, so I'm off. Write soon Frank and may your next letter be postmarked "Bayridge, N. Y."

My best to you,

Jim

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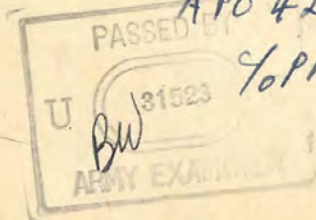


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