

432 Sgdn., 17th Bomb. Gp.

A.P.O. 520 - 9 Postm. - N.Y.C.

July 30, 1943

Mya Folks, -

Here goes for a start on what is destined to be my weekly letter! - That is, if I can keep this cigar under control and write too. - Last week we were given 4 cigars in what is technically known as our "weekly rations". - Actually, we only get them once a week, sometimes! - However, the last two weeks have been fruitful weeks, so why say anything? - Our rations are "PX" stuff. - We have to buy them, of course - but like you in the states - we are rationed on what we can buy, by whatever rations the sgdn. is able to obtain for ration purposes. - Some weeks we can get soap, writing paper, cigars, cigarettes, pipe tobacco - 3 or 4 packages of gum - 1 bar or 2 of some 5¢ candy. This past week - no candy or gum or tobacco, whereas last week - we ~~had~~ had 3 bars of peanut brittle! - You never know - just get what you can.

I guess the high point of our last

week was the party, we gave ourselves
Our sqdn gave one party for our enlisted
men - and several days later - another one
just for the officers of the sqdn. - 'Course -
we all chipped in for it. - so - we gave
ourselves a party!

First - several weeks ago - we sent a
plane to Cairo for a little "firewater" not
of the native kind. - The British have quite
a bit that they ration to the men but
the American Army goes dry. - Anyway -
we had the results of the Cairo trip.
hired a hall in town, - set up a bar, got
an orchestra, - invited some nurses and
local French girls - and as there was no
mission the following day - declared it a
legal holiday! - Don't know when we've
all had such a good time. - It ended up
practically a stag affair, as only 6 nurses
showed up - and the French gals were
ignored mostly. - If you had seen them
you would have understood why! - Ugh!
Anyway - all the officers forgot themselves
and as all were known to each other -
and all had shared the same dangers, there
was no compunction of holding oneself
down. -!

You should have seen it. - all the way

2/ them flying - a night where there was plenty to drink has been known as - "a wet front". Well, it was definitely a wet front and everyone was on instruments you know how a radio range is equipped to send out an "A" and an "N" signal to guide the flyers - to keep them on the beam, so to speak? - Well, what else could you expect of a bunch of airmen. - Someone stood on either side of the door leading to the bar - one on one side saying ^{"A"} ^{dit Tah}, and the one on the other side saying ^{"N"} ^{Tah dit}! Stuff like that was happening all evening and it was too funny for words. It's something you'd just have to see to appreciate! Some of the boys could play musical instruments - so they got in the band and played the instruments - some lots better than the musicians in the orchestra! None got really drunk - just well oiled. -!- That is, only one or two got really drunk. When they began to show signs of their liquor - the Major just mentioned to them that he thought they'd had enough - and to go back to camp. - He always sent 'em home with a couple of others in a jeep just to make sure they got home and to bed O.K. - Nothing rough or boisterous!

You needn't worry about me, either. ^{While} I wasn't a bystander in all the fun, - I ended up as driver of one of the jeeps so you can see I wasn't misbehaving? I also got up courage and asked one of the nurses for a date - a tentative one, - but as yet I haven't fulfilled it. I've been wondering what the heck one would do on a date in North Africa?

Say - you should see all the mail I got today - 12 letters all told. - 1 from the Calif. Loops, - 1 from Lewis & Nancy, - 1 from Brother, 6 from Sister, 2 from Fred and a package of V-mails from Sister - the one with the pencil lead in it. The last and some of the others were forwarded from B.T.C. but most of Sister's, 1 of Fred's and Brother's were ~~always~~ addressed directly here -! - (The fellows are all talking around here so don't be surprised if I start writing the conversation down.) Guess from now on my mail will be mostly on schedule, so you had better write often to keep me from "itching". - Oh, yes - also to those letters - add a couple of Birthday cards! - For me! Pretty good timing for such long.

3/ range mailing! - Thanks so much and don't think I don't know you will be with me in thoughts! - Even if I will have to sing "Happy Birthday to me"! This thing of singing that song to myself is getting to be a habit. - Maybe one of these years I'll be where you all can sing it - and I'll just do the listening! - This year - I'll even go a little farther - I'll wish myself - many more birthdays to come, - and I mean it!

Today - has really been our day. - Our Sqdn. had ice-cream for dinner desert! He sent the ingredients into town where it was made up and frozen for us. of course - we sent enough for 20 gals. and only got 5 gals out of it! - But it was good! - The first time in months that I've even seen the stuff! - Couldn't eat it at first - just sat there eyeing it for a couple of minutes - but when it started melting I went into "high blow" and really went into action!

- Saturday - 3/6/41.

Had to stop last night. - It came time for the show to start. - We have an open air movie and recently we've had

a show every night. - As last night, I had seen it before, but that's a small matter over here. - Most of them are so old I've forgotten them anyway. - Everyone takes an old oil can - a blanket, and that's their seat! - Naturally, the first to come get the closer seats, so as it's a 16 mm. film - the crowd starts early. - Some at least 2 hrs. before it gets dark enough to start the show. - The pictures as I say - are reduced down from regular movies to make shipping easier - and all carry a beginning caption that states something to the effect it is being shown for the Armed Forces over-seas by the Motion Picture Industry, and at no cost to the War Dept. - A noble thought?!

Bought a small grass rug in town last time I was in. - Now I can walk around in the tent and not have the ground stinging under my feet! - You'd be surprised at how much ~~of~~ more of a pleasing atmosphere it gives. - That and my "rag toes" for foot lockers - I'll soon have all the comforts of civilization, by gosh!

A new way to get rich quick! - The

4/ natives around here are sure reaping
a harvest. Cantilopes are now in season
and they bring them around camp for
a killing - We have finally gotten the
prices down to 18 and 20 paces a kilo -
(36 to 40 cents for 2.2 lbs.) - but even then
a fair size melon will ~~cost~~ cost at least
40 cents! - It's a shame in a way - Some
of us try to get prices down to normal -
but there's always someone who will pay
their prices so there's nothing left to
do but meet them or do without - So!!
If these natives aren't rich by the
time the war is over I'll never know
why! A normal weeks (average) of 2 suits
of khaki - some shorts & socks usually
runs from 4 to 6 dollars - and we even
furnish the soap! - See what I mean?

Say - don't you know what plane
I fly or did the California branch get
it mixed up? - In their letter they
asked if I was a pilot or copilot in
a P-38 (a twin engine - single seat pursuit
ship!). Maybe they thought that just
because P-38's are made in Los Angeles,
I must fly them! - Oh well - I didn't use
to know planes by their designation

numbers, - so guess I'll have to excuse them!

Just been up flying again - This time we practised flying on just one engine - !. It's not bad, - but back in the states - flying our type plane on one engine was practically unheard of. - In fact, even over here, we can't get our "crew chiefs" or any members to go up with us when they know we're going to practice "single engine". - Don't blame them I guess - but it's something we have to keep our hand in. - You never know when you might have to come home that way - and it's foolish to lose a plane + crew just thru neglect on the pilot's part to familiarize himself with the procedures. - I still maintain we can't know too much about our plane.

Boy, - I was counting up my flying time the other day. - I've now got ~~over~~ over 500 hrs. That's a lot of flying when you stop to realize all the time I flew back in cubs only amounted to about 60 hrs! How did you ever have enough nerve to go up with me, Ma, when I only had less than 40 hrs? - A brave person! The more

5/ time I ~~to~~ can get the, the better I'll like it. - for it is chiefly thru your flying time that they rate your experience. - ask Illie if she would still take a trip with me in a plane? -

Oh - in Lewis and Nancy's letter - they mentioned that Jack Rosendall had been taken a prisoner of War by the Germans during the African campaign. - Don't know how they knew - but thought you might like the news on him.

Poor ol' "Sham" takes a beating. - We get canned meat so much and it's the bourn of everyone when we see it and don't happen to be feeling in exactly a good mood. - The latest statement I heard was the other day. - Some one saw "Sham" was the meal, and turned to the person next to him and said, - "you know - I heard the other day that when a ship is torpedoed, - the Sham on board is fixed so it won't sink with the ship. - It has a device that allows it to float so other ships can pick it up and bring it on to us."

- Well. - guess it's time to sign off for this time. I'll drop you a V mail

when I can think of something more
to say. - Now that I have Vmail, ah
Bye now - and be good -

Love,
Frank