

Dear Betty Ann

29 August 1944

I have been writing this letter to you since 0300 hrs 17 August. I came back from the front at that time and found two letters from you. One of them had the picture of you + Bill on the settee and the other was the Red Suit on Bill near the footprints of Freddy. I was glad to get them. I ate breakfast and went out with Bill W. About eleven o'clock I was caught in some mortar fire. I had a feeling from the second I saw the Red Suit I was going to get hit, but I didn't know when or where. I never felt like I did that way before and I had been under fire with Bill W. every day since I joined the Division with exception of two days rest that the whole Division enjoyed. I came to France 27 July with Bill Roddis father's friend who took Bill W. + me over by plane.

at noon on 17 August I ate a bit of ration chocolate and then at 1300 I went to a little town with Bill W to a company command post. at 1330 I was hit by a bit of shrapnel that went in the small of my back and came out later right near the lower ribs on the front. It was German 88 stuff and there was no way I could get away. Farmer + Hoffman + myself were laying ^{down} in this slight depression back of a brick barn. I yelled for an aid man but Farmer (jeep radio driver) did me up with 1st aid packet and gave me a swallow of water and two pills we all have. Hoffman was a T/4 and a radio operator. It was funny now as I think of it. as we were squeezed together and you could feel Hoffman who was next to me shake + he could probably feel me shake. I don't know!

The Germans were still shelling with 88's so we said that we should get out of here. So with a little help I ran for the radio jeep and they, Farmer & Hoffman took me back. They all treated me, as they all do to everyone, in an excellent manner. At some point before I got to the hospital the doc (unknown) reached in and got the piece of shrapnel out me. I ran about a 100 yds to the radio jeep & crawled through a barbed wire fence but I haven't run since. By 1800 hours I was under an X-ray. I helped a nurse give directions in German to some German wounded. Her name was Miss Hooker, Sue was her 1st name, and she was from Durham North Carolina & knew Jim & Joe Mason etc.

Since I wasn't hit badly I was shaved in & got surrounded by some wounded German prisoners. I had lost my clothes about suppertime when they cut them off of me & gave me plenty of blankets to keep warm. Later I ask to have my shoes taken off & I begin to feel hungry & thirsty. They wouldn't give me anything until they were sure I was O.K. in my organs. About 0400 on the morning of 18 Aug I began to get chills & a nurse came around & got me to operating tent. A surgeon young & nice looking cleaned my wound after I got a needle in my arm to put me to sleep. His name was Clark & graduate of Texas University. Then I feel asleep. I awoke about 1000 hrs on morning of 18 August & felt good. The only thing was I could not water. I did everything so they said they would take the water. I said like hell. And about 1600 in the afternoon I crawled out of bed & on my hands & knees got rid of my water. I was so thankful.

I slept pretty good and ate pretty good. I told the doc about the Red Suit picture & he said it was for good luck as the shrapnel took the best path possible, & missing spleen bladder kidneys, stomach lungs etc. A slight deviation from the lucky path it did follow could have caused a serious wound.

I still have the drain in me, but I feel all right, so I will continue writing.

19 August about 1000 hrs Van Koll came to see me I was certainly mighty glad to see him as he was the 1st old friend I had seen since I was hit.

20 August the chaplain came in & gave a news report as he did every morning & read this Sunday morning about a 5 minute lesson. We all appreciated it very much. I can only say that the German 88 is making Christians of the American Army like wildfire. Late that afternoon I got my clothes that Bill W. had sent down via Van Koll and walked around. I was a bit shaky but went to airstrip where I slept Sunday ~~and Monday~~ nights. Tuesday I was back in England as Monday night we were taken to England by airplane. I was stunned being in England and still pinch myself as I can't believe it. Monday night at midnight we had apple sauce of hot soup followed by ice cream. It was like being in heaven.

August 22, I dropped into Peg's home just at tea time before reporting to the hospital. I gave the driver a to as I was so grateful and glad to be alive.

I went to the window and waved as I always do, so the dog doesn't bark and run around real foolish. Elizabeth saw me first and she couldn't believe her eyes. Peg came to the front door and let me in for tea. Boushe came and collected me for dinner that evening and then I turned into the hospital which is about a mile away. Boushe took me in a staff car & go we settled. The doc looked at my dressing and put in another drain. It hurt a little, but it felt good to get the traveling bandages off which were getting dirty.

25 and 24 August I took it easy and rested up. I could write, but just didn't feel like it as I just didn't do it. I had so much to tell and yet didn't know what to do. I can't explain it, but only ask you to understand.

26 August I got up, put on my uniform and went to the hotel for supper and dance. Of course, I didn't dance but sat around and met all the people I once knew. West welcomed me at the door and Griffin was glad to see me too. Peg and her girl friend Lizzie Baker were my guests and I brought a friend George Marlow, Harvard Law and lives near Hartford Conn.

I forgot to tell you I received the packages from the Collins girl, two boxes of chocolate, 4 lighters from Fred and two dresses + 3 tennis balls. I received them all with thanks and immediately passed out the candy & filled up all around. This was received the 19th of August and I felt funny as hell about getting them.

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26 August I got my July pay of about £400.⁰⁰ or 25.⁰⁰
I owed Peg £5 as she paid my bill at the hotel when I left so
suddenly 26 July. Then I gave her £5 to hold in safe
keeping for me so I would have a bit to fall back on & she
won't have to cash any more checks for me. I have £5
balance left so I spent £10 getting oriented. I gave West
Isuffer and the 1st hotel staff a total of £3 as I wanted to tip
them when I left anyway. Hence £7 still unaccounted
for - 1 £ for cab back to hospital, £2 for
dinner & dance for the party, 1 £ for cab the
other night, 1 £ for coca cola & beer for
old soldiers like your loving husband, hence I spent
about £2 at the bar on Saturday night. I stayed to
my usual beer and was glad to be there.

(I knew he was broke)
On Sunday I went down to the office and saw
Pendleton and gave him money for mailing things
home to you. It was toward the end of the month
so I gave him a pound £1 and told him that you
had told me to give it to him as he had been so
good to me and we both appreciated it so much.
I saw Bill Roddis father's friend and he shook my
hand and congratulated me on being in England &
getting a Bronze Star.

Sunday afternoon & Monday afternoon I
took Peg & Elizabeth for a short walk, sit in the park
and took it easy.

All my love, Your husband.
Bill

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