

My trip to
Africa

Feb 10, 1952
12 noon

Dear Mom, Bill, + everyone,

I'm sitting in my bunk now on the ship trying to write this. The ship is rolling back + forth quite a bit, but it doesn't seem to bother me like it did at first. I'll write a little every day till I get there, so you'll know all about the trip.

Friday 8th - I reported to the Overseas Transp. office around 8 AM and busses came to take us to Staten Island where the ship was docked about 9:45 AM. As we were going over on the ferry we passed the Statue of Liberty, and it made me realize just what it meant. The ship was docked at Pier 10 on Staten Island, so we got off the busses, went through a line of sailors who checked off our names, and up the gangplank onto the ship. We had a wonderful dinner and the ship pulled out at 2:30 PM. There was a band playing old Lang Syne + it was very nice. The ship is a nice big transport. Built in 1947. It has 6 decks and my cabin is on the 5th deck. I share it with 2 other wonderful girls, and we have a picnic every day. One is going to Casablanca + the other to Naples, Italy. The ship only makes 3 stops - I can't remember the other

one in Italy. Christine is from North Carolina & really has a drawl. Cute & awfully nice. The meals are the best I've ever eaten. Taste just like home cooking. We get served by waiters in white coats & black pants and we eat with the officers. There are several thousand soldiers aboard too, but we seldom see them as we are restricted to certain areas and so are they. I started taking my seasick pills before I got on the boat. Maybe that's why I don't feel sick yet.

Curfew is at 11 PM, which means everyone goes to their cabin, but you can stay up as late as you like. About 3:00 PM today we had a fire drill & lifeboat drill. It was very sporting to put on life jackets and go to your lifeboat station while all the gongs were ringing. That was about the first thing we did after we got aboard which is a very sensible idea. The boat is easy to get lost on, but it is fun to explore around. They have a nice lounge for cards, etc., & they serve a snack for us at 10 every night. The roll of the ship is about the strangest feeling I ever had. The waters were pretty calm today, but Christine & I got a little dizzy about bedtime so we hit the sack P.D.Q.

Saturday 9th - Had quite a bit of excitement today. My first experience with big waves. We were at dinner and the ship began to rock & roll. The dishes slid down the table, food was spilled, and Christine slid across the room on her

chair & landed on her fanny. Didn't hurt any of us, but it was quite an experience. That happened 3 times today and I managed to grab ahold of something & stay anchored every time. When the ship rocks that way everything slides across the room including the people. This is quite the life. Had a movie tonight, but it wasn't very good. I sat next to a post and hugged it for all I was worth & all the girls linked arms so we wouldn't fall over. More fun. There are about 110 dependents aboard, & most of them seem very nice. Lots of small children & babies too. Don't know how the poor mothers can stand it with all the responsibility of the children. Not seasick yet - thanks to those pills. Several of the women & children are sick as dogs, but I feel fine. Sat out on the deck in chairs and read a while today, but it is pretty cold out there.

Sunday - 10th - Went to Church this morning and it was very nice. Lots of people. Can't get over the wonderful food they have. Saw another movie this evening. Had turkey for dinner.

Monday 11th - Had a storm last night and it was pretty rough riding. Didn't sleep much. This evening we had a bunch of fellows from the troops entertain us. They were pretty good. Dishes flew off the table again today.

Tuesday 12th - Boy, what a night we spent last night! Didn't sleep over 3 hours I know. Worse rocking we have had yet! I'll sure be glad to get off this ship onto dry land again. There was a rumor that an MP standing guard on C Deck got knocked over by a big wave & got his head gashed. Deck is restricted now. Don't know how true the story is. Got a little seasick yesterday morning and this morning - not real bad though.

Wednesday 13th - Slept most of today. I was so worn out from that tossing of last night that I had to get some sleep. I can't sleep very well at all at night, but I really go to town in the daytime. A lady smuggled a little Chi-wawa dog in under her coat and she is keeping it in her dresser drawer. It has been reported and something is going to happen, but I don't know what. Had a dance on B Deck tonight and had a swell time. Music was nice. Five of us didn't dance - couldn't see dancing with another man on my way over to my husband, but we sure had a picnic watching. There sure are some characters on this ship!

Thursday 14th - Felt kinda sick this morning, but still not bad. We passed the Azores this afternoon, and it's surprising

how good 2 big pieces of rock looked! Everyone was glad to see a little bit of land. Chaplin started a French class yesterday and we listened for about 4 hours to him tell all about the Moslem people and their peculiar ways. This is really some land I am going to.

If I had more time I'd tell you all about it. Found out the ship locked in Casablanca at 10:30 Sunday morning. It can't be soon enough for me. These past few days have seemed like weeks. I can't sleep at night for dreaming of that man of mine. It's really rough! Ha.

Friday - 15th. Got our debarking instructions today from the commander.

Can't say I understand it all, but it's a little clearer. I'll make it off this ship - I'm sure of that - if I have to swim. Went to a movie.

Saturday 16th - Christine & I both woke up a little sick today. There is a virus going around the ship. Diabrea^(sp) and vomiting. I guess we had a touch of that. Feel better now, but still not good. Fine day to be getting sick. Had a horrible time getting to sleep again last night. I can imagine what tonight will be like knowing I'll see him in the morning. I'm packed and have to do a few more things yet, so I'll close

6.
this long winded letter here. Don't
expect a letter for at least 5 days.
I'm not gonna get out of bed. Tuckee.
I promised Jackie and the girls I'd
write mom, but this letter is all I
could wangle, so will you either call
Jackie at 4427 and make arrangements
to give her this letter or mail it to her
at 1071 N. Church. I'll sure appreciate
it if you will, because I know they
will be mad if they don't get a letter.
So long for now. This has really
been an experience I'll never forget.
If you ever have a chance to take an ocean
trip, don't pass it up. Bye now.
Can't wait to see my Jerry. Been taking
nerve pills the last 2 days. Whew!

Bye again + Love You.

Betty