

Lieutenant Arthur H. Buchman,  
Fort Mills, Philippine Islands.

Thursday  
October 16, 1941

Dear folks,

Well, here goes a letter. Dont know where to begin and dont feel too much like writing, but realize that I am due.

Received your airmail letter, September 29th. Although it arrived in Manila, September 16th. Received radio around the 6th of October. It arrived in Manila September 29th. Received boat letter October 10th.

Arrived in the Philippines August 16th and then things began to happen. We were met about five miles out by a landing party from all of the major posts in the islands, who gave us our assignments for duty.

Sailed in and met by huge crowd and Philippine Army Band. Spent that nite and the following day and nite looking over Manila. It's quite a place. Really oriental! Not much like Hawaii. Very low standard of living, very few cars, and practically no English people. Also they have very few tourists. It's very hard to get anything decent to eat in Manila, because so much of the food is diseased, and Americans pick up these diseases very easy. There is an awful smell all over Manila, and in some places you cant stand it nohow.

There are a few places that are considered to be outstanding places to eat and drink, but they are just like average American places. Most of the transportation in Manila is by Carromatas---one-horse buggies. Taxis are cheap here

The Philippine Archipelago consists of a group of several thousand islands located about 600 miles off the coast of South and Indo China.

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The largest of these islands is Luzon, which is about 150 miles wide and 500 miles long. Manila is on the island of Luzon and has a population of about 400,000.

The heat here is equal to most equatorial countries and the humidity is usually higher. Today, for instance, it's too hot to play tennis for 30 minutes at any time during the day. The rainy season extends from June to November. This season is also the typhoon season. March to June is the hot season and if it's cool now, God help us when it warms up.

The money used here is the centavo and the peso. 100 centavos equals one peso. So the money they use here has just half the value of American money.

I am stationed at Fort Mills, which is on the island of Corregidor about 30 miles from Manila and guards the entrance to Manila Bay and the Philippines. It is considered one of the most beautiful of the islands. It is four miles long and one and one-half miles wide. On three of its faces it rises directly 600 feet to a somewhat level plateau. On the fourth, the slope toward the bay is less abrupt, affording practicable routes for roads and an electric trolley car line from the sea to the plateau.

There are four regiments here. Two are white and two are Filipino. There are about 200 white officers and no Filipino officers on Corregidor. 2000 white troops and 2000 Filipino troops.

Corregidor is the defense of the Philippine Islands. On the 'Rock' as Corregidor is called are all the big guns in the P.I. It is supposed to be one of the most strongly fortified islands in the world and most certainly the strongest in the U.S. Army. Yet not a gun is visible to even powerful glasses from the sea or from the air.



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All of the enlisted men here are trained regular army men, and practically all of the officers are West Pointers.

The Fort has a complete system of underground tunnels, batteries, and storehouses, stocked with enough food and ammunition to last over two years without any help from anywhere.

All officers have their own quarters here in Corregidor. They are houses with quarters upstairs and downstairs. I am upstairs with three other officers; Lt. Hodgson, from Minneapolis, who was with me at Fort Casey and flew with me to San Francisco, Lt. Barton from Mississippi and Lt. Traw from Kansas. Hodge and I were luckier than heck to be stationed together here at Corregidor and both are in the 59th Coast Artillery, which is one of the most famous regiments in the U.S. Army history.

We have six large rooms, four good sized closets, two bathrooms, a pantry and a big kitchen to boot, also three more rooms for servants, and a 10 foot wide porch that extends completely around the quarters. So you can see that we have plenty of room here. We maintain our own mess, which is the custom. We had to buy dishes and all sorts of kitchen utensils. We had beds, desks, chests of drawers, dining room table and chairs, ice box, and electric range here. However, we will have to buy a few davenports and easy chairs and lamps. All of the furniture here is bamboo, which looks good and is comparatively inexpensive.

We have three servants, who are all full-time and eat and sleep here. All they eat is rice and fishheads. The cook is very good and makes chicken, ice cream, biscuits, etc. The house-boy cleans house, waits on table, cleans shoes, shines metal, keeps clothes in order, and many other things. The washboy or lavandero as they are called here washes and irons all day.

The names of our servants are: Pacifico, Fortunato, and Simplicio.

The clothes problem is extremely important here. They are very particular about how officers dress at Corregidor. Our khakis are a special Hong Kong Khaki, that are supposed to absorb sweat, but only so much of it.

After five in the afternoon, officers must wear the white dress uniform at all times, and if there is any special occasion we must wear white full dress uniforms with all the gold braid. All officers uniforms are tailor-made, and one just keeps sending them back to the tailor until they fit properly.

Each officer wears about four complete uniforms a day. Khakis until noon, a clean pair of khakis in the afternoon, whites with shorts for any sort of recreation in the afternoon and white uniforms with coat in the evenings. So you can see that we keep our washboy busy. The houseboy usually helps with the ironing.

All of our uniforms must be starched and pressed just right. We use a lot of starch and are very particular about how the uniforms look. Half of the game is to keep up the morale, and dressing perfectly at all times helps very much. Supper is always served with all of us in our whites, complete with tie, coat and ornaments.

You might be interested to know that all of the meat and eggs in the Philippines that were shipped from the U.S. are ten to fifteen years old and have been in cold storage. Native meat is very poor, so U.S. meat is all we use. We have very little fruit here, just oranges and grapefruit from the states. The native fruit is usually diseased and surprisingly there does not seem to be much of it around. All of the vegetables come in cans from the states.



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Outside of the island of Luzon and a few other places, the P.I. are plenty primitive---just like Africa. People have their own habits and customs, and most of them are ignorant. There are murders every day by savages in the out-lying provinces.

This is the only post in the U.S. Army, where officers carry loaded pistols all day and all nite long----ready to fire at any instant.

we have a nine-hole golf course and about ten tennis courts. Also, we have a very beautiful officers club.

By the way, there are no women on the island of Corregidor and there are only about a hundred white women in Manila, of whom one never sees any of them.

This letter probably sounds more like a newspaper article than a letter, but it gives some of the pertinent information, and will be a foundation for future letters.

By the way, I would like my Christmas present pronto. A pair of glasses with the horn-rimmed frames as those I have, with my prescription in them combined with green sun glasses, and I dont mean a tint, but regular dark green sun glasses all in one. Also the leather case to go with. The sun is terrific here and will be getting worse. I could get them here, but everyone here is so unreliable that there's no// telling what they would give me. Dr. Weill and Davis have my prescription.

The letterhead address is sufficient for future mail. Hope all the sisters are doing themselves proud and glad to hear Marcia got a raise.

*Bud*

P.S. Minnesota seems to be doing all right!