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Sunday —
January 27th -

My Darling Wife —

This evening we're having our chat in the Red Cross Club in Kanchrapara - just outside of Calcutta, India, and we will probably have all the rest of our chats, till I get on the boat, right here 'cause our tents here are just that - tents - and, over here is a lot nicer place for our chat 'cause although we aren't alone we can just shut out everything else and be alone here in our chat. And this evening - oh, Darling, there are so many things to tell you - let's begin with Saturday morning. I was wondering how I would get awake at five in the morning without an alarm - but the problem was solved for me -: a chap who stayed behind acted as C.Q. and got us up - the whole outfit - for 5:30 breakfast. At 6:10 we got on trucks (3101st trucks) and drove to the 99 area where we had been processed - but that's where the Army's "hurry-up-and-wait" schedule began! We waited there for a half hour and finally boarded trucks belonging to Quartermaster - and after sitting there for another half hour we made the trip to Chabua. It was a chilly ride and the colored drivers covered the 50 miles in about an hour and a half - so I don't know whether we were shaking from the cold or from the close shaves. When we got to Chabua we went straight to the air-strip - and we thought we'd get right on the plane. A mistake had been made, though, and we had to go to the replacement depot at Chabua to wait for the plane. There we spent the morning waiting - and a pocket book came to my rescue -; I curled up with it and before I knew it, dinnertime had arrived. We ate in the mess hall there and had a good meal - turkey - 'course, though we didn't

knows it at the time, we were going to have Red Cross coffee and peanut butter sandwiches for supper. After dinner the waiting wasn't so bad 'cause the PX opened and Van Brakle was a regular customer in the coke line. They also had Doddy and cookies so I supplemented my dinner with - dessert -. Our shipment order was 806 - one order to a plane - and after dinner the first one to leave was 801. About three o'clock our order was called - (Van Brakle gulped his last coke!) and again we boarded trucks for our trip to the airport. We never learn - 'cause I thought that when we got to the airport our plane would be waiting and we'd be on our way - and then I learned. When we reached the airport not even 803 had left - with 804 and 805 standing by! The reason for the wait is that the planes aren't kept at Chabua - each morning they are flown up from Calcutta and each afternoon they return - and for some reason, yesterday they were late in arriving. About 4:30 the planes started to arrive - and, Darling, I wish I could describe the sight. The Chabua airport is the twin of any Stateside port - long, white cement runways, control tower, small planes dotting the field - the only difference being that Chabua has many things the Stateside ports don't have: the Indian foliage - and the cows. A jeep is kept handy at all times - and there's good reason. One plane was circling the field when a cow ambled down the runway - not hurrying - just taking its time. As soon as the cow hit the strip the jeep took off and chased the cow all over the strip till it disappeared in the bushes. The cow gone - the plane landed. And the plane - Darling, I wish I would have had a camera -. We traveled in C-54's -

and they're really some planes. They are all metal - bright and shining - four motors - and bigger than you can imagine. There were 30 men to a shipment - and had there been 45 we still wouldn't have been crowded. Have you ever seen a picture of the ship? It has a tricycle landing gear - so the tail never sits on the ground - and the body of the plane is at least ten feet off the ground. Just the passenger compartment is as long as your house - from front to back - and almost as wide. Passengers sit sideways, on two long benches - one on each side, and the seats are hammock-like affairs. Our flight was the last one to be made yesterday (807 stayed in Chelma till this morning) and we took off at 5:30. Since it was late, the plane wasn't refuld - and as soon as we got on it taxied to the runaway. When it taxis it uses only two of its four motors - and just hearing all four start roaring gives you confidence -. We fastened our safety belts, the ship started moving - and without a bump to betray it - we were in the air. There was only one inconvenience - and that was the pressure on your ears - remember how they felt in the elevators when we were going to the top of the Empire State Bldg? A yawn snapped them back to normal - and once off the ground our eyes were watching the ground till it was too dark to see. I was thinking of the train ride - and how glad I was that this time we would do in four hours what had taken us almost that many days. After we were on our way we were told we could go up to the cockpit and look around - and that was the most interesting part of the trip. Everybody thought that the pilot would be on the alert - wide-awake at the controls -

and it was a jolt to see him slumped there, his feet propped up on the controls and he reading a magazine. Automatic pilot! It stunned us - all he did was flip a switch and the controls did everything by themselves: we were "on the beam"! For part of the trip Van Brahl was co-pilot to the automatic pilot (all I did was sit in the seat). The pilot answered my questions - showed me the different controls and left me slip on the earphones. Our average speed was between 185-200 miles per hour and we were about 6,000 feet in the air - and all the time I was hearing San Francisco radio. The ride reminded me of my trips back to Monmouth - those early Monday morning rides. I had been up since five - and with all the hurrying and waiting I was half-asleep. There was no hint of air-sickness. We did hit a few rough spots - bounced around a bit and dropped into air pockets - but they didn't make me even dizzy and now I'm a firm believer in air travel. When we reached Calcutta we had to circle the city five times while we waited for clearance to land - and seeing all those thousands of lights below me seemed so unlike the India that I have known that I thought we were over San Francisco (and how I wish that we would have been). Landing was just like taking off - but this time, because we lost altitude quite rapidly, there was a slight "roller-coaster feeling" in my stomach - but when we landed, there wasn't a bounce. There were coolies at the port to unload our baggage - so till it was ready for us, we dashed to the airport "coffee" shop - where - to most fellows disgust, but my complete satisfaction -

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they served delicious tea and sandwiches - as that's when I had my evening snack: three large cups of tea, two meat sandwiches and four cheese sandwiches. I had been quite stuffy up to that time, but they chased the stuffiness and we collected our bags. We got on trucks, and again we waited - but finally we started on the last leg of our trip. That is a ride I'll never forget. We didn't leave the airport till eleven o'clock - but instead of empty - the streets of Calcutta were jammed. There is some sort of indigence celebration going on and they carry on till morning. The streets are narrow - very narrow - two trucks must almost scrape the houses to pass - there are no sidewalks. We roared through the streets at 30 miles per hour and many Indians dove or were pushed into the gutters that are flush against the houses. We did sideswipe a British lorry and wreck a bicycle - but nobody ever stops over here - especially when they hit something and we went roaring on. And the smell - stench. I'll describe for more fully when we're together - and I'll never forget - but can you get a picture? - thousands of black bodies covered with soiled white cloths sprawled in gutters, in doorways - everywhere you can imagine - just dropping - and sleeping where they drop. Dirty shacks - one tight against the other running out to the very street. We reached camp about 11 or a little after - told here are some empty tents and were left. They were American tents, eight beds to a tent - dirt floors and no sides - and as soon as we could pull out our blankets we crawled in bed. Last evening we had no chat on paper - but you were with me every moment - and you were there beside me when I crawled under the covers, - we had taken a big step toward Our Day - but I hope that from here on in there need be no more days when we can't have our chat - they are the real part of our days now and no day is complete without them.

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We thought that since this was Sunday we could spend the morning in bed - but at seven we were called over the P.A. system and at 7:30 we started our day. We packed all four things - loaded into trucks and again we were processed - seems to be a never-ending process. They dumped us out in the middle of a field by a big hangar - and we sat there in line till ten o'clock. Then we filed into the hangars, and filled out more cards and papers than I could keep track of. After that all of the papers we had filled out were themselves processed - which was followed by a clothing check - everything we owned being dumped, sorted, checked - and then repacked. And now I'm glad I carried only the necessaries - 'cause all the fellows who carried extra things - bothering with them all this time - were relieved of them this morning, so they got no benefit from them and lots of extra aches. Then it was dinner-time, so we loaded on trucks and had chow - this time letting our things locked in the hangar - and that was quite a treat after having had to lug them every place we went. After dinner our records were given a final complete checking and we got on trucks and moved to a new area - which was no different from the first area we were in! Only difference: this tent has sides which can be lowered at night and raised during the day - but in all other respects it is the same - ground floor - no electricity - and Indian beds. Army cots are luxurious compared to these beds which are simply wooden frames with a woven rope mattress - woven just like the rubber bed that I had, but with none of the comfort! They were made for Indians - and since Indians are short of stature - an additional foot is needed for us and it is added simply by tying pieces of rope from the end of the bed to the mattress - you'll

have to see it to "appreciate" it!

I put up my mosquito bar and arranged my things as best I could - so now I'm settled in Kanchrapara. Then came an amazing discovery: all the water in this camp is fit to drink! Before, all water to drink came from Lister bags and mess halls where it had been boiled ~~and~~ chlorinated, but here they have a large system and can chlorinate every bit of water used in the camp - so I got an extra treat by being able to drink water from the same spigot from which I drew shaving water! I shaved and took a long shower and, golly, it felt so good - really did wonders. And by the time I was finished it was supper time - and I was really hungry. After today, a meal of cold cuts really tasted good and they had all the cheese I could eat. Dessert - ice cream - with a chocolate nut syrup to pour over it - ice cream is my favorite dessert!

Tomorrow we are going to have an orientation lecture so I'll want to hear what they tell us, and let you know where we're going from here. Rumor has it we'll be here anywhere from 3 to 5 weeks depending upon the arrival of the boats - but we'll see what they tell us tomorrow.

Now - even though it's early - let's crawl in bed - we'll get a good night's rest and get the trip - tired-ness out of our systems. The first big step is over - and, now, Darling the next step is the boat - and I hope that it can be soon.

Goodnight, Darling - God Bless You -

All My Love - From Me - Just For You.

I love you very, very much -

Your Hubby

Jerry OX