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1959-02-02, Bette to Parents

Bette J. Barto

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Subject Terms
Women and the military, Women and war, United States -- Air Force, United States -- Army -- Air Forces, Photographs, Armed Forces -- Correspondence, Correspondence -- Vietnam War -- 1961-1975, Christmas

Summary
This collection contains 139 correspondence from Maj. Bette J. Barto, USAFE to her parents while serving as a nurse during the late 1950s and 1960s. Also included are three photographs, one special orders document, and one marriage license. In several cases, Bette refers to her parents as "Lizzie" and "Hugh Elmer," or simply "Elmer." Three letters from 1961 or 1962 are undated and placed in a separate folder.

Keywords
1959-02-02, 1959-02-03

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Dear Mom and Sidney,

In waiting for you to come by for dinner, I thought I'd better start a note even if I don't write much. I have to start at 3 or 4 o'clock, but got nowhere. This has been an extremely trying week for me.

3 February 59

4:30 p.m.

Joe arrived and we had dinner at the little officer's club, 'The Nomad' down by the Mediterranean. That will really be nice when it's warm enough to eat on the terrace. Joe had been to Egypt Sunday to deliver an airplane engine to one of our bases. He was a little green at me because I was at the club Sunday night with someone else when he got back. Too bad for him, because he hasn't been here in 100 days for Alexandria, Louisiana, so I can't see waiting around for him to call when he's off flying all over Europe!

Saturday night we had the reception for our new base commander, Col. Riffle, who just arrived from Washington. Our chief nurse didn't mention that it was mandatory until noon Sat. and I was on duty; so I didn't know about...
it until 3 pm. and by that time, Kelly had loaned her blouse to someone else and my white blouse is somewhere between Tennessee or North Africa in that footlocker. Kelly got lucky and borrowed me one from another Capt. who didn't have to go. Kelly worked 3-11 as usual so she didn't have to. I had a really marvelous time, met hundreds of people and ended up at dinner with a detachment of fighter pilots who are stationed at Bitburg, Germany but who are down here for Gunnery School in the desert. One of the pilots was named Betty Harris (married name) so she took a fancy to me and introduced me to all her friends. There are several single men around here, lots more married and millions who pretend to be single, but aren't. That's not unusual I suppose, but somehow usually knew the truth because this is a very small town community though it is the biggest base outside the U.S.A.

Everybody seemed to know me and that I was coming before I arrived. I have had a pretty big rush as far as dinner invitations are concerned. I guess I have bought my own about 3 times in all since I arrived. Tonight I have a date to go downtown with a 1st Lt. Don African (Arapo) - one of the permanent party jet pilots who are the protectors of our base. He was on my ward last week for surgery.
United States Air Forces Europe

on a ganglion. His left wrist. He is out of the stage, but can't fly because that is his radar control hand. The nose is the plane he flew is filled with radar equipment. (Below, Mom, the F-86-D is a single seated plane. There are very few two seated planes there, as a matter of fact.)

The work situation is no better. I changed to a Medical Ward today to get oriented to a 5 day tour 9 of March and a tour 9 11. I immediately following that. I'm still attached to my Surgical Ward, but will work relief quite often in the Medical Area.

5 February 53

The last part of the letter was written under the hair dryer at the local beauty parlor. If is run by Italians who happen very little English, so they give your hair to "film themselves" very interesting. Me, the young men did my hair, of course the first time I went but I got to give this trip and couldn't help myself because I didn't know the help's name.

I was taken to "The Swan" which is a very nice restaurant run by Italians (all food is fresh) in the local. The food is very fresh and good. We had fresh shrimp cocktail, steaks with mushroom sauce, and we had fresh strawberries for dessert.
I slept most of yesterday—my first day off in 9 days—and the rest of the day I ran errands, got food from the Commissary, and cleaned & re-arranged my bare little room. Sure miss my junk.

The Commissary is about 1/2 the size of our White Star and has very little variety except in canned goods. They have only Tide soap, powder, no Jif or Jifbleach, but the AFE (same as PX) has Snow. They have no Mayonnaise—only salad dressing I hate it—they do have lots of fruit juices & canned fruit—plenty of Cereal—plenty of frozen meat—steaks are the best thing to buy and since I have been here the only thing the store will let you order any place to deck because it apparently is all the canvas on base. We had Friday's dinner at the store yesterday and you would have been amazed at the actions of the people. We full Colonel stood there and glared at us while he picked over it all and filled bag after bag for the better fellows. When we got to the bin there was nothing much left but we finally found a small slab-way desert bread—all we could use before it would spoil. This is to be the last shipment—the Libyans政府 will allow in here—you see if we won't use their products they refuse entry on ours and we won't use theirs because it is fertilized with human feces & urine. It all goes eh what?
Last evening Jim came over and we drove to the Bay salt water bath at the beach and went wading in the sand along the Mediterranean. We got off early this afternoon, his arm is still in a sling and he can't fly. The sea is lovely when it's calm as it was yesterday, but the beach is covered by big bands of seaweed that need to be cut down now before swim season begins.

Now I want you to call Gage one day soon (at Hamilton's) and remind her to be looking for a swimsuit or two with little boy short pants. You know I'd like a couple on it - instead of tight fitting around the bottom. If she finds them, try mail it on and sell me for it including mailing charge - it won't be too much longer before we need them.

Tomorrow Jeff's neck for surgery - I hope everything goes well and that they can eake for you. Or for both.

I'm sorry your new furnace is giving you so much trouble, Mom and Elmer, and that it's so expensive.

I'm mailing some picture postcards - things I've seen - until I get a camera to take some real ones. It's not quite this pretty, the dirt doesn't show, but they're reasonably close.

Don't work too hard. Love you all. Miss you.