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1959-01-26, 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.

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Dear Mom and Hugh Elmer,

This is the first minute I've had to write again. I got your card and letter today. Mom, first mail that is. Since I got here— that's 6 days— for a letter, just about!

Today was my day off and Polly's too, but I had to teach an hour at the Service Training Program, so I had to go in uniform this a.m. spoiling my day off. I was off yesterday, too, but spent it getting my talk prepared. The kids have colored themselves out taking me around to see all the sights and I've been so much I don't know where to start telling you about it. For my birthday they took me down into Trepold to the Fresh-Fish Restaurant—a real Italian place and we had a really good birthday dinner. The Italians are quite plentiful and have the only places clean enough to eat in. If you don't eat anything the Arabs cook or fast food, it'd be to ask for hot, warm, intestinal upsets, diarrhea, and the like. The next evening we went to the Club by Happy Hour and met a million people. I met the pilots that all the girls knew. I took me to dinner and then we all drove downtown into Reggi to the home of one of the dentists.
for a party. The pilot had a thing to Germany the next day and I couldn't have gone if I'd been off. I went downtown again for dinner at the Del Mezcal, a very fancy Italian restaurant and we had five courses. The first one was spaghetti. #3 was fish & lemon sauce, #3 was real cefeto. #4 was salad and bread and cheese. #5 was dessert—ice cream and chocolate syrup. #6 was expresso coffee (Dahwall they call it) which is their straight coffee—strong enough to float a battleship. The last trouble was walking out after all that food!

Sunday night, Joe, the pilot, was back from Germany and we took me out to dinner at the Officers' Club.

They worked like a beaver ever since I got here. So far I'm still on the surgical service. I don't think I'm going to be moved. I don't think the chief of the service wants me to stay on surgery. I've been an odd bunch. The arabs are an odd bunch. It's hard to figure how they live in the middle of it.

They think we're equal and poverty. They think we're equal and we have to much. The ones who work hard have no friends. The maids who work hard as house maids wear the raggiest garb you ever saw. If an Arab man comes up here to deliver something they grab these raggedy clothes and throw them aside except for one pair. They call these garb “barbarians.” I have one ordered just for the kicks. Of it will make a fine masquerade outfit.
Transportation is quite a problem here. All the kids have cars and if they're off, we have a way to get places. They all want us to drive their cars, but I don't want to until I have been here awhile longer. I'm going to keep a bicycle, because I need the exercise and the weather here is beautiful. It's sunny most all the time, but cool enough for a light jacket at night.

The Mediterranean is beautiful. It's so blue it's unbelievable. It's just the black from us. I haven't been on the beach yet but were going to go horseback riding along there soon.

I ordered a Hi-fi set from Germany, but probably won't get it for 2-3 months. Philips in Paris has already come and it's a beautiful thing. We have already started collecting records. I'll be good when our household goods arrive. I have the whole room. Everybody else is stacked with stuff they've bought.

I have a job for you. Ron, if you don't mind. Buy me some Bath powder - Aquasphere, or Command Performance or Soap - any kind,
2. Healthy liquid spray deodorant - Pent about $3.50 - all they have is Alral which I can't stand. 3. About 3 pairs of socks, Sport - they have only 3 or 4 kinds.
4. Max Factor pan cake makeup - Tan # 2.
5. Revlon orange plug lipstick, one tube.
6. Call the Melle Norman Studio on Church and see if they will send you Melle Norman Mid-tone powder base
If they will, send one or two. I hate to
ask you to do this, but they just don't have these things. He won't eat out as much when our stuff comes. The food is good except at the places we have gone, it is terrible. I can't stand the bread or the milk. Joe is going to bring me milk from Germany. The stuff here is sterilized and tastes like reconstituted milk. The bread is awful - can't describe it. If you want to have a couple of leaves of lettuce, get your five cent wrapped in aluminum foil. It should keep. We are all hungry for bread. As soon as I get my first pay, I want to relearn to make biscuits because we can get Crisco and White Lily. It's funny how little things seem so important over here. We have no lettuce. The girls are not as fun. The one of them that I like best is the one I'm replacing - Ernie. He's a nut. He's so happy to be going home it's cute to watch. The leaves 1st April.

I'm in Sally room with 6 of them the hi-fi is blaring and they're all singing. I'll quit cause I keep getting mixed up & writing what they're saying.

I miss you,
love you.
Beck