2-28-1959

1959-02-28, 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
1959-02-28

Identifier
2017-219-w-r-_Barto_ColdWar_1959-02-28

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28 February 59
Saturday
6:45 pm

Dear Mom and Daddy,

I’m waiting for you both to come to take me to Africa. I got back at midnight Thursday after I spent a week in Germany and brought me some lovely records and lots of German milk. He also brought me a few other things for me but refused to say what last evening. I have an idea it’s a German cucumber clock. I had a fit over this, so I guess he got new hearing aid because I’ve heard it click. The milk was a huge surprise. I wanted to last night and had my Shredded Wheat and Real milk this AM about 5 hours earlier than you have yours, Mom.

The Merle Norman Makeup came today along with 2 letters from you! Now all that hasn’t come is the Miller’s deodorant and stuff and the bathing suit. I can’t figure what made that disappear. She was because I paid it $4.74 and $17.84 on 29 January. So I hope they are being honest with me. I guess these were bills that didn’t come in the January bill. It signed are mine.
I'll mail you a check for all this stuff as soon as I get my pay. It goes directly to the bank so I have to wait until I hear it on deposit before I can write checks. I do so appreciate your getting all that stuff sent to me, Mom. I know what a lot of trouble it is for you to do it.

I can't remember if I told you before, Mom, that I sent you a portable transistor radio. It should be there by now or within the week. Let me know if there's anything wrong with it. If it was finished right I can get it paid for. It will pay me the way to work and it will be good even if the electricity is off. I don't know how long it will play without a new battery, but you can read the instruction book. I think it's a long time.

Sunday 6:30 P.M.

I didn't progress the way you at this hour. Mom just arrived to take me to dinner again and to a movie.

Monday 1:30 A.M.

I'm on duty now and all of my 14 patients are sleeping for a
wonder. I have a full wing - Medical and Surgical, the Med. ward has Medical, pediatrics and Neuropsychiatric patients, so it can be a wild place. Right now it's so quiet I fear it can't last until 0700. I come off 11-7 in the morning and go back on 7-3 the next a.m. and work 6-10 flat days before I get another day off. We took a rather day away from me before I came to work tonight. The only consolation is that everyone is in the same boat except her jet.

Ernie, the one Betty Edmunds knew, and whom I'm replacing when she leaves is 30 days in the hospital with the mumps. She was her here yesterday so I have been here in the same room I was in. She still has the mumps for I keep hoping she won't succumb, I just keep hoping. She made 2 mumps shots here now. We have a 40 year old major-filot in the next room. I guess there just must be a lot of it going around. I personally am glad to be away from Ernie. I had it spiritually at one time but now only has it on one side.

So far, only had it at one side.

Ernie did bring me a Cuckoo Clock as I had guessed. He's waiting to hang it after I move across the hall after Ernie leaves. He also brought me a musical German beer mug that plays a little German song.
when you lift it up, I'm afraid I'm going to be23 suggested by all this attention. I'm trying to do better. Perhaps it's good stateside. I'm going to Wednesday night, we are going to a dinner dance at the Officers' Club - given by his friends. A big club - it should be nice. I don't know if it will last but whatever I do whatever I do will be OK, for everyone here is very enviable. I have stateside clothing - that's very little one can buy here, except wool knits and wool materials imported from Italy. You can buy fairly nice Italian handbags, but shoes are scarce and leather and summer clothes just aren't available.

This place never ceased to amaze me as far as the people are concerned. Yesterday morning, about 4 am as I was walking down the mile corridor from 8 to 8, I saw a body stretched full-length in the hall way. It gave me a creep. Feeling but of course it was only a peddle (SEE-DEEKE). An area, that is, taking a little map before work time in our mess. They sleep anywhere - along the roadside in a ditch, in the doorway of a building - it makes no difference. They have a marvelous sense of humor though. If "they understand any English at all, they love a joke."
One of the bitter waiters at the club gets a big laugh when we ordered Suk-El-Juma camel steak with mana mana sauce. The "Suk-el-Juma" is a little village about 2 miles from the where they have a Friday market that would equal Market Square on Saturday. I think that he must have protested that. When we ordered this we get a filet on a tenderloin steak but the taste is great fun anyway. So order a Cordial Calling we ask for a Figura lemonade - another little Arab town on the other side of the base. The only bad part dealing with Arab waiters and maids and the like is that they can always pretend they don't understand if they don't want to listen. This they do very well. We have Mo's (that's what they are all named - all the men are Mohammed, something or other and the women are all Fatima or "Fatma") anyway, we have them working in the hospital as cleaning men and they are Mostly loyal and of course in what they do. And if you try to give them instructions in how you want it done, they suddenly can't understand you at all. However, if you smile they smile and some or later they give in and do the job part way.
How to go look after a couple of surgical patients and make rounds on this floor. All's still quiet.

Mom, don't you worry unnecessarily about your C.S. M. Dr. Sam isn't the kind who would withhold information you should have to prevent your injuring yourself. This “take it easy” is no more than we've been telling you for some time. To stop pretending but stop this working for 4 or 5 weeks at a time with no day off! You promised you'd ask for relief — the other nurses do.

Helen still hasn't written, I keep looking for a letter every day. I haven't been very letter time to write with her ditto gang — I enjoyed her letter you sent.

All quiet for now — we have to put two stamps on the envelope.

I can't think of much else to say anyway.

Thank you again for all the stuff. Will send you a check for the sendin' over the other stuff shortly.

Love you both.

Berta.