1959-05-13, 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 & Daddy,

I'm at a meeting waiting for the rest of the group to come back. We'll eat and go to the De Sade movie and go from there. I didn't feel up to that one today as I've ever been.

Last night we went downtown for dinner and had salad, wine and lots of spaghetti & stuff at the De Meheri Hotel. We came back about 9pm and stopped at the little club. He brought a bottle of champagne and that was my mistake. I lost all my lovely dinner in about an hour after we came home. The only bright spot in my trip was that I put a quarter in a slot machine and won $1.25, then I put a second quarter in and won $1.00!!!! I was so surprised I nearly fell over. I quit and came home. Yes Mom, I will not spend it. I will mail it to San
Antoine to the bank. Remember, my first $15.00 in the bank was won at Bingo. That’s the last time I won anything until last nite. Anyway, today I had a real champagne hangover, so I ate something downtown. Two other girls were sick too, so I had company. I’m off tomorrow and work 3-11 Fri, Sat, Sun. I don’t mind too much because if it’s pretty, I’ll sunbathe anyway.

If I don’t forget when I get home I’ll send you a check for the Miller’s stuff and I’ll include enough to have you send me another war girdle. I want a short tiger by Peter Pan. Tell them it’s a panty girdle but as of heavier elastic than the long legged tiger you sent me. I wear it for all my short trousers and jeans.

Saturday noon.

Sorry I didn’t get this mailed but I had a very exciting day off. I went into the Libyan desert to El Uvatia (water) which is the bombing range for the F-100 fighter bombers to practice on. I rode out with the range officer on a big
cargo-type helicopter. It's a 2 hour ride out into the desert. I stayed all day—the only woman for 100's of miles except the Arab ladies who live in windtents in the desert. I sat all day in the tower and watched our big beautiful aircraft come in groups of 3 to 4 to practice bombing and strafing. I got some really spectacular shots of planes doing acrobatics after they'd finished their regular work. They'd fly close to the tower so I could get a good picture. He had a really good lunch. There are only 12-15 men all alone out there and my arrival really brightened their day. You'd have thought I was the Queen of Sheba. He had baked ham, candied yams, buttered corn, green peas, tossed salad with French dressing, ice cream & frozen strawberries for lunch. Some food for the middle of the North African desert. I saw camel caravans, Arab sheep and goat herders and me & the most gruesome sights I ever hope to see was the onslaught of a locust plague. The locusts are like big green grasshoppers and they move on a walking row like a green blanket.
obliterating every thorn in sight. They had had the pest control board surround El Vikut with a poison placed on the ground in a thick band. We sat in the tower and watched the green carpet approach the band and they died by the squirming thousands! It was really something to see. He walked out into the moving forest and you could kill 50. 75 under one foot depending on the size of your foot. With my whipper I was nearly #1 Pest Control Operator! All in all it was an unusual & absorbing day and I jiggled home in the Chapman about 6 pm just about bushed. The country is lovely from the air & the skyline & Tripoli proper & the sea is particularly beautiful at sunset.

I worked 7-11 yesterday and again today. This morning we had a big airshow for Arm. Forces Day. It was fun to watch because I knew someone in nearly every fly-by. The pilots is coming in after Wallis who flew the lead ship in one flight. He's bringing me a model F-100. What he flew to replace Don's F-86 that I'm consigning to the Wash
I found out that this little friend was a GermanFraulein, so the positive he's crazy. I'm sorry too for he's a very nice boy just too young.

Well, I must half go get my shoes polished, it's not long till 3 pm. I'm sure you got the box.

I hope Helene soon learns the true reason for the out-doors journey.

So easy on that cleaning and I hope you can go to Helen's soon, Mom.

Love to you both.

Bette

P.S. The baby Camel Saddler will be here by tonight, I'll mail them as soon as I get them packed!