1959-08-25, Bette to Parents

Bette J. Barto
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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25 Aug. '51

Tuesday.

Dear Mom and Daddy,

By now you must be having a wonderful visit with Uncle Claud. I haven't had a letter in about 5 days, so I gather that means you've put off your trip out. It was a good one for each of you.

I'm writing at the Beauty Park under the dryer if that explains the canceled spasm. I am on 3-11 for the second day today and go back on 7-13 at 8 a.m. That isn't very much fun, but I'd rather be off at 3, because otherwise Ray sits and mopes until I get off at eleven. He's spoiled now, just add am so he entertains himself as best he can and then comes for me at 11 p.m. I'm hoping he is serious about his intention to enroll in the University of Maryland extension school which we have here on base. He wants to go to school, but feels his past school age. I'm not pushing it one way or the other because he's the one who will have to study. Though he's been most happy to sit home with him while he does.
My teaching days will begin again in September - don't yet know the dates - so we have lesson plans to occupy my off hours too.

I have been in Naples all again since I last wrote to you. Last week I started with nausea, diarrhea and mild abdominal discomfort. This continued all through the day and night until Saturday. I felt much improved. Then Sat. night, Ray and I decided on a big dress up evening of dinner and dancing at the British Officers Club. I wore my new party dress and Ray was downright handsome in his air force Captain's jacket (dark navy with an air force emblem on the jacket & gold buttons). He even outdid himself and wore a bow tie just to please me. Anyway to make a long story short, I made a first effort of it by doubling up with upper and epigastric pain - just under the rib cage. By the time I started on the main course of dinner, I could barely sit up straight! So we came home and I told Al & Paul that Ray had left over from his last dinner of the same, and I went to bed at 11:30 on our first Sat. nite off together in ages - so you know I was hurting! I slept until 11:30am Sunday without turning over and when Ray came in from golf...
at 7:30 I was up, feeling fine and ready to go. It is over that way, and everyone expects it; so no one gets shock, but it still is quite painful.

I stayed for a few minutes to have my nails done. I have been so busy when I am off duty that I hardly find time for hair, nails, and dresses — Ray and I went to downtown Seattle Saturday, when I got off from work, to pick up 20 of my dresses that an Italian lady was fixing for me — one is broken zipper, one with I seems to let out — no need of gain — just too little last year (the one I the white collar in the picture you have) and one of the new ones that Grace sent me that was too tight across the hips — she did a beautiful job on them and it all cost me 1 pound 50 in pieces which is equivalent to $3.11. Can you imagine alterations stateside costing that little. After we got my dresses we went to an Italian meat market and bought some of the prettiest meat I have seen since I left home. It is flown in from Finland once or twice a week and is really fresh. We got 6 beautiful steaks, ground meat for meat loaf, and a beautiful roast. Which I hope I can cook without ruining it. Ray had defrosted his refrigerator while I worked so we had room to freeze it immediately. Like I said, it’s most handy about the house.
It will be Daddy’s birthday by the time you get this; so unless I get off in time to get a birthday card for him tomorrow afternoon this will have to suffice until I can get a later one. May happy memories of the day, Elmer!

I’m back at home now—had to stop and buy some bread for a sandwich before going on duty and to buy a pair of Red Cross duty shoes. I don’t like them as well as the Clinics but I waited too long to write Spencer’s and my old Clinics popped a hole in the side yesterday. This humidity plus constant polishing is hard on the leather— that and the sand make it a hard job to have decent looking feet—and you know how particular I am about my good shoes!

It’s all quiet for now and get into that White Outfit—only 8 hours of it— then sleep 5 or 8 hours more. Hope I get a letter today.

Love you both
Betty