10-15-1961

1961-10-15, 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 Daddy,

I'm up early on my day off—couldn't sleep any longer because Ray is coming home today! Of course, he may not get here until after midnight, but that's alright too—just so long as he's here!

Your beautiful surprise gift arrived Thursday, Mom, and it is the prettiest gold bedspread I've ever seen. I dashed right home to put it on the bed and enjoyed it one whole evening with the wrong side out—so I had another lovely bedspread to try on, when I finally decided on putting the right side up! You must have paid a small fortune for it. I haven't mailed the two size 6s to you because each day I keep hoping you will come down to visit.

I've been busy as a cat on a tin roof this week—ever since Ray called he'd be home. He's been an angel about writing; since he got the E.R.'s finished. He was sick last weekend and stayed in bed all night Sat. and all day Sunday—probably food he ate or the severe dust storm "gbley" they had-like in North Africa.

The house is shining, the yard's mowed, the cars washed, freezers loaded with steak,
clothes all washed and ironed, winter clothes out, summer ones away, new pillow coverings on our three pillows. Uncle Ray’s picture finally is hanging in our dining room. I had to paint the old frame—couldn’t find a new one without paying a fortune for it. All the storage closets are shining straight. I even built racks for our hose and places to hang our yard chairs on the walls—one of them cracked me in the skull last week when I was rooting around trying to get the rake out from under it, so now it’s out of the way and the bump on my head is gone too!

We are still collecting tomatoes and green peppers from the back yard, but it’s so cold this morning, I fear we may be nearing frosty weather. We had a transient cold front come over from Tennessee last night and the wind blew–a rain fell. I was afraid it would mean Ray’s flight wouldn’t get home today, but it moved on, and the sun is gloriously bright, though cold, this morning. I finally gave up and turned the air conditioner on and the heat on this morning; guess one should, by the 15th of October.

I’m playing golf at 0915 with my lady boss that will keep me from going berserk until I hear those screaming F-105’s coming in. Col. Menge is playing a tournament match;
She asked me to go along for luck. I thought that was nice. She outplays me anymore because I've had quite a layoff from golf, but I enjoy her anyway. It's curious about the game, but still doesn't make everyone miserable around her. Some golfers do. Ray says he'd rather play with her and me than most men he knows.

She had a big disaster alert practice yesterday morning, on our day off—it started at 0830 and ran to 1200. My ward was stripped and ready for action 4 minutes after the alert sounded. We received 15 “bloody” (made up) and 7 actual gory injuries from amputations to open jaw fractures and sucking chest wounds—many with 30-40% body surface burned) casualties. They looked so real it was hard to realize it was plastic make-up. So we fervently cared for them under the close scrutiny of the Wing Commander, Gen. Moore, and a whole slew of full colonels, plus visitors from civilian hospitals in the area. They all were impressed with the way we worked, and I had more than one doctor compliment my ward staff for the efficient manner in which each incoming victim was handled. We tried. Our hospital commander was apparently pleased because if we looked good, so did he.
I got a nice, long, hectic letter from sister. She surely has had a sickening experience with her renters. I know she has had a time trying to undo or cover up the damage to their house. Isn't it just the way though? After the way she tried to keep the other lady's house? Helen feels real bad because she hasn't told you about the piano. I feel guilty because I did, Mom, so don't ever let her know I told you. It was really none of my business, but I get peeved at her because I think she places wrong values on what's necessary but that's her business; and I guess the kids and their growth and development come first, even if she's got to go naked or hungry. So don't tell on me. She'll tell you sooner or later, because her conscience is pinching her about it.

Well, I better stop & get my blacks on; too cold for sheeds today.

I'll mail this on the way to the golf course.

Write and come as soon as you can.

I love you both,
Belle.