

THE DOPE

May 15, 1943

Published now and then at Douglas, Michigan,
for its sons in the Service. No. 15.

"Frost Tonight". "Colder Tomorrow". "Michigan Farmers Beginning To Worry". That's the weather picture lately, and we're all getting slightly sick of it. There's hardly a blossom between here and Fennville and there isn't a tulip in sight. Perhaps we won't have all those vegetables after all. Perhaps we'll just keep on shovelling coal.....and have a nice, white 4th of July.

Here's a letter from young Bob Mueller, one of our 17-year old boys in the Navy, that makes every man and woman in Douglas proud of our boys in the Service: "New York City, April 24th, Dear Folks: I cannot tell you much. I am back in the States again after being gone so long that the Statue of Liberty looked darn good. I received your Easter card and think it is very pretty and very thoughtful of you to send.....Am glad that you received your allotments. On my next trip I am going to take gunner's mate 3rd class. I am a 1st class seaman now and when I take gunner's mate 3rd class I will get more pay and can send you more money. We will be leaving very soon again. I can't tell you when or where. You say Dad waits for the mailman every day. Well I don't blame him. We were in port just 30 minutes when we went for our mail and it was sure good to read your letters from home again....At sea it took us 16 days going over and it was very good going but when we came back it took us 22 days and it was very stormy and very cold. Do you remember that piece in the paper about the Russell Skinner boy from Fennville? Well if you know where he was, that is where we just came from. But I can't mention it, as you know. It is where we convoy ships to and when I get home again I will tell you plenty things. I saw the largest battleship in the world. Boy that was a good sight to see. I'll tell you all about it when I get back. It sure is a beauty....You ought to see the suntan I have now. I look like a nigger. Is Betty still working in the defense plant in Holland? I do hope she had a nice birthday and Johnny too.....I am well and gaining a little weight now. With love from your son,"

You'd never recognize your old athletic field these days. The ball ground, both infield and out, is heaped up with sixty-odd loads of clay, to be scattered in a three-inch covering over the entire layout. There'll be no excuse for booting grounders when you boys get back - we're going to have the hottest ball-field in southwestern Michigan.

Perhaps the most unusual exhibit that has come to Douglas in many moons turned up in our midst last week. It was a grass skirt - the sort worn by dusky maidens in the far reaches of the South Pacific - and was sent to Herman Bekken by his son Ev in New Caledonia. As an article of wearing apparel it leaves much to be desired, especially from the protective angle, but it has some advantages, obviously. Ky Walz had the thing in his shop window for a while, but it didn't help the hair-cutting business at all so Ky got rid of it. (We understand it can still be seen, though, at private showings by Pa Bekken). The last we saw it, Wallie Williams was peering intently at it through Ky's window - with a look in his eye we'd never seen before.

Capt. Bill Tisdale writes from "somewhere in Australia", April 22nd: "Just one year ago today I said good-bye to old San Francisco and sailed out through the Golden Gate. Sight of the old Gate right now would look like the entrance to the Promised Land.Have been rather busy lately as Special Service Officer in this area. It was my privilege to make all arrangements for Joe. E. Brown when he was here and to accompany him on his tour entertaining the troops. Joe is one fine gent and is doing great work....Frank Haven (Douglas' former baseball manager) is now a Captain, having received his promotion in January...Best regards to all the boys". (The Dope wishes to express the pleasure of all Douglas folks in learning that Capt. Tisdale is out of the hospital and back on the job again).

Father Nugent sends you one about an aviation cadet, this time at a high-pressure school. The boy was taking notes from a fast-talking instructor when he dropped his pencil. It took a few moments to find the thing but he finally came up with it. Turning to a fellow cadet he whispered: "Did he say anything?" "Say anything!" said the other, "You missed a year of college algebra".

Ky Walz got a letter from Jack Powers this week, still "somewhere in North Africa". Jack's principal concern seemed to be an item in the March 15th Dope in which Bud Miller, just back in Australia from New Guinea, said he was "as skinny as Jack Powers". Jack writes: "Ask Bud if he remembers when I used to wrestle with him and put him on his back. Tell him I can still do it too. I'll prove it in Berlin". (How about it, Bud?)

A big reception and picnic dinner at the Congregational Church last night - to meet and welcome the new pastor and his wife, the Rev. and Mrs. Albert Dawe. The Dawes come to Douglas from Clare, have been in church work for many years, and we're all looking forward to a long and pleasant association with them.

A number of our boys have received promotions lately: Vic Culver, Billy Goshorn and Boss Jennings are Pfc's; Alfred Pshea is a Shipfitter 2/C; Arnold Garrelts and Orville Millar are Corporals; Matt Sabo and Lawrence Welch have been made Staff Sergeants; and Ev Bekken and Max Campbell have been appointed Warrant Officers. The Dope extends sincere congratulations to each of these men - we homefolks take great pride in your accomplishments.

Vic Culver popped into town for a Sunday visit not long ago - he's over at Camp Grant now, attending a Meat and Dairy Inspectors School. Vic sure looked fine, seemed very happy, and said there's only one place in the world he'd rather be than where he is - and that's Douglas. Attaboy, Vic!

And we had a nice visit with Max Campbell recently. Max had just gotten his Warrant Officer's commission (15 minutes before starting on a 10-day furlough) and was feeling pretty fine. He wasn't sporting his bars as yet, but he still looked mighty impressive with that armful of stripes and armored insignia. Gotta have something to get away with all that.

This issue of The Dope is mailed to all Douglas men in the Services through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Van Syckel.

Did you hear about the fellow who received a notice from his Draft Board and wrote back: "Not interested. Please take my name off your mailing list". They did. He's doing KP now.

We've had a number of replies to our questionnaire to date, a brief digest of which follows: Most of the boys like the Army and Navy, and most of them like their jobs. The grub seems to be universally good, the comments thereon running from "O.K." and "good" to "swell" and "best in the west". The beer, however, doesn't stand up so well; it rates all the way from "cold and good" to "weak", "rotten" and "bilge water". The question about girls produced a variety of opinion, though we got a distinct impression that they aren't up to the Douglas standard. In color they're black, white, brown, red and "off"; and in general all-around what-have-you they rate "fair", "wild", "O.K.", "no good", "a flop" and "not bad". So far, however, only one of our boys, Bruce Gates, seems to have approached this subject with real enthusiasm. Bruce replies simply: "Wow!" The non-coms and petty-officers came off pretty well, no adverse comments having been received and many good words being said for them. Perhaps the most complimentary of these came from S/Sgt. Matt Sabo who wrote: "We're swell guys - just ask us". And we're happy to report that The Dope proved acceptable beyond all expectations, the only suggestions being "send it more often". (Thanks, boys; we'll do our best).

So long,

H. S. K.