

THE DOPE

Feb. 20, 1944

Published now and then at Douglas, Michigan,
for its sons in the Service. No. 32.

Just as we were beginning to think that the winter was about over (and were pondering plans for an early garden) along comes the Old Man and takes a real swiipe at us. Temperatures suddenly dropped to around zero, the wind howled off the lake and the snow piled up - and we realized that we lived in Michigan after all. . . . But strange as it may seem, we have'nt heard any griping. On the contrary it has seemed sort of good to have the old town all draped in white again - especially when we know that those white days are numbered.

The best news that's reached Douglas in a long time was a recent report in the G.R. Press that members of the Red Arrow division (and all other troops that have been in the SW Pacific more than 18 months) are to be furloughed home as soon as practicable. This hits a number of our men right on the button: Benny & Smoky in the 32nd; & Ev Thomas, Jack Campbell, Johnny Smith & Ev Bekken in other units. Also, it won't take long now for Bull Durham and Lawrence Shumaker to click off 18 months. Boy, what a day it's going to be for Douglas when we can see your smiling maps again!

Speaking of furloughs, we ambled into the P.O. the other morning and noticed, standing at the delivery window, a soldier who looked as big as a house. Moving cautiously around for a better view, who should it turn out to be but Jerry Bekken. (With no warning to anyone he had busted in at five that morning, on a 15-day furlough from Jackson, Miss.) Honestly, to our freshly-opened eyes Jerry looked about eight feet tall and almost as broad. We don't know what's happening to Warrant Officer Ev Bekken out there in New Caledonia, but one thing we can tell him sure: He's going to be awfully nice to that kid brother of his when this war is over.

And Alfred Pshea's been home again, with a 10-day leave from the Submarine Base at New London, Conn. We tried to see and talk with Alfred but could'nt even catch him on the phone. Had a chat with his mother, though, who offered an entirely satisfactory explanation: "These girls", she said, "keep Alfred pretty busy".

More dope on Ky: On January 29th he folded his razors, corked his tonics, and headed for Virginia. He and Mrs. Walz are having themselves a well-earned holiday down there, with relatives in Norfolk. At last reports, Ky was oiling up for a hunting foray down into the Carolinas.

Some first-hand news of Steve Hamlin: Royal and Mrs. Reeder, Steve's aunt and uncle, spent 10 days out in California with him recently and report everything fine. Cpl. Steve's a First Cook now, very keen about his job, and thinks California's swell. . . Not too swell, however; Royal said he called Steve's attention to one of those beautiful California sunsets and Steve sighed: "Yes, but I wish it was over Lake Michigan".

G.I.: "I'll be frank; you're not the first girl I've kissed".
Gal: "Well, I'll be frank too; you've got a lot to learn".

Basketball - February 4th at Saugatuck: Saug 39, Fruitport 26. The boys really got going for this one and turned in a nice performance. Jack Breckenridge was high scorer and our boy Engel scored six points from the guard position. Altogether, after the long weeks of tough sledding, a very gratifying game. And the boys were greatly disappointed when bad weather stalled the Bloomingdale game last week - they were hot and knew it. Next week: Fennville at Fennville.

From Benny in New Guinea: . . . "Wish I could get hold of a good hamburger. They suck you under in Australia - half of them are muttonburgers. . But we're getting some good candy bars and gum lately. I believe they're reorganizing the Army or something. It really is surprising, the improvements that have been made in the last year. You can tell just about what sort of dehydrated food you're eating now. I can remember when we didn't have the slightest idea".

Another officer for Douglas: We're happy to report that Ev Thomas has graduated from the Officer Candidates School in Australia and is now 2nd Lieut. Thomas. Great work, Ev! You, too, earned it the hard way - and we all send congratulations. . . Incidentally, Ev drew three weeks in hospital and a minor operation as a sort of graduation present - but that's over the dam now. And De Thomas has been home again, but this time on a brief and unhappy mission: to attend the funeral of one of Douglas' grand old-timers, Mrs. Ada Eaton.

From Bud Standish "somewhere in Corsica" to his mother, Jan. 25, (after completing more than 50 bombing missions over enemy territory): "It won't be long now before I'll be sitting across the table from you enjoying our dinner date. . What a great day! . . Corsica is beautiful, the trees and roses are in bloom, and there are no Arabs. But the prettiest spot in all the world is home and I can't get there too quickly. Will either call or wire you the moment I land in the States. All my love, Bud".

Mary had a little lamb, some salad and desert,
Then gave the Sarge a wrong address - the dirty little flirt.

And on this subject, Billy Goshorn writes from England about going to a party with a WAAF; Bob Mueller tells about a lovely French girl in Morocco; Benny Fisch casually mentions "some babes" in Australia; Harold Beery writes of tea with an English lady; and Bull Durham repeatedly speaks of Sally in New Guinea. . . . Who said our Douglas boys did 'nt know their way around?

This issue of The Dope has been mailed to all Douglas men in the Services through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Willis Bryan.

We're glad to report that the Jones family, out on the New Richmond road for the past 3 years, is returning to Douglas to live. Mrs. Jones has bought the old octagon house (at Randolph & Mixer) which the family formerly occupied here. This move will add three more fine boys to our roster: Harold, with the Marines in New Britain; Harmon, with the Seabees and now home on 30-day leave; and Hugh, 17, with the Marines in San Diego. The Dope takes great pleasure in welcoming the Joneses back to Douglas.

Hugh writes from boot camp: "I'm learning more every day, for which the Japs will soon be sorry". And the Japs have already had plenty of sorrow at the hands of Hallie and Harmon. Hallie went through the battles of Marue Harbor and New Georgia, spent a period recuperating from malaria in New Hebrides, and is now 1st gunner in a machine-gun squad in New Britain. And Harmon went through Tarawa and Abemama. He went ashore in the 3rd wave at Tarawa, blazing away with a submachine-gun almost from the moment he left his barge. His description of the landing convinced all we had read about it - and then some. . . Harmon was in Abemama when the tragic news reached him of his father's and brother's deaths. By special direction from Washington, he left the island on February 1st, flew by four-motored bomber to Funafuti in the Ellices; thence by Pan-Am Clipper to Honolulu by way of Canton and Palmyra Islands; and from there to Oakland, Calif., by air-mail transport. The trip from Oakland to Douglas was made by train, completing 7800 miles of travel in eleven days. . And incidentally, he arrived in Oakland wearing just what he had on when they scooped him up in Abemama: khaki shirt and trousers, shoes, a steel helmet - and nothing else. Talking with Harmon was our first experience at hearing first-hand about the realities of war from one of our own boys. . . . As we listened to this 18-year-old youngster, talking calmly and clear-eyed about a thing like Tarawa, we old fellows can't help but feel a tremendous surge of pride - in our boys, our village, and our country.

So long,

H. S. K.