



CHAPTER ONE

OCTOBER 13TH, 1946

Dear Family,

We left Camp Stoneman, Pittsburg, California, on Thursday morning the 3rd of October, and by bus drove to San Francisco. We looked pretty sharp in our ODs (olive drabs) with pistol belt, canteen, first aid packet and a full musette bag. We stood around on the dock at Fort Mason for an hour or so before boarding the Army Transport Admiral Sims at noon. We went on the ship alphabetically by rank, and being a tech sergeant, I went into the first cabin with three other techs and two staff sergeants.

Mary A. Riddie

*Dear Folks,
Last night the WAC Staff Director
gave us all the information*

The ship is really something, we are treated very nicely, have maid service and swell meals. We have six girls in our stateroom. We have double-deck bunks with bed lamps, wall lockers and a sink. I don't know what the GIs' quarters are, as they stay on the deck below. We have no duties on the trip and spend most of our time on deck, or reading and sleeping. They took a lot of pictures of us as we got onto the ship and I hope you saw some of them and will send them to me.

The first night out was quite rough and although I was not actually seasick I came closer to it than ever again on the trip. You may have seen in the paper where we had returned to San Francisco the next morning. It seems that something went wrong with the engines and we sat on the ship from Friday morning to Saturday noon while a repair crew worked.

Saturday noon we left again and the weather has been quite rough. Twice we were ordered off the deck for fear of going overboard. I have enjoyed it and have been a real good sailor. From the spray of water our clothes are covered with

salt and are all white and grimy. You think of a ship as being clean, but one really gets dirty.

We have movies almost every night and every day a newspaper is printed. So far we've seen only one ship and that was about an inch high on the horizon. We also saw a fin of a shark and the spout of a whale, that is all.

Just had to add a little more here to tell you about an interesting phenomenon I saw tonight. We were up on deck – it is pitch black out and the ship is in total darkness, the sea is a little



Ready, set to go

rough with many whitecaps. As you look straight down over the rail into the water it looks as if someone had dropped a handful of diamonds into the water. Or it might look like flying lightning bugs, anyhow the sight is lovely and I found out that the illumination is caused by friction of the phosphorus in water. Some more of the wonders of nature!

Wednesday morning was such an exciting day too. At about 6:30 in the morning someone came down and started yelling that they had seen land.

CAMP STONEMAN

Camp Stoneman in Pittsburg, California, was a major military site during WWII. Located about forty miles northeast of San Francisco, the camp was activated on May 28, 1942, and decommissioned on August 30, 1954. Named for George Stoneman, a Civil War cavalry commander and early Governor of California, the facility processed thousands of troops, first those headed for the Pacific Theater, and later, those coming home for discharge.

The camp's function was to quickly receive and process troops for overseas service. They processed all the paperwork, updated records, arranged for last minute training, provided medical and dental care, and issued and serviced equipment. When finished, the troops were taken by bus or by boat to pier-side at Fort Mason and their ships.

We all dressed in a mad hurry (also in clothes), and rushed up on deck. There, off the starboard bow, we saw what looked like a dark cloud sitting on the horizon – must be the mainland of Japan. And then, a little to the port of that, we saw Mt.



Mary, the traveler, in life jacket

Fuji. It was pretty hazy, but when the light hit the snow on top of the volcano it was lovely. Such a thrilling experience!

Our lovely USAT Sims is doing very well, covering about 500 miles a day and making 4,800 miles in 10 days. We are

very excited as we are slated to get off the boat at 2:00 this afternoon and now all we have to do is try to cram all our junk into our suitcases, so I have to go and sit on my suitcase.

Will write soon, Love, Mary

WE ARRIVE IN JAPAN

OCTOBER 16, 1946

JOURNAL

People were running up and down the corridors and their voices were getting louder and more excited. One by one lights were turned on and suddenly everyone seemed headed for the



had prevented us from getting a view of it and
started to climb up it. we were of course too close
but a million miles of

CHAPTER SEVEN

七

25 AUGUST 1947

TRIP TO MT. FUJI

Dear Family,

There is another tale to tell you, but this time it is not about how we wallowed in luxury at a nice comfortable rest hotel, it is quite different. It is about mountains. You see, here in Japan, I have become quite chummy with mountains, and I want to tell you what I learned of them. I had never really before thought of a volcano as a living thing, complete with personality, drives and complexes just like the rest of us. But Mt. Fuji, the backbone of Japanese

art and culture, definitely has its very own personality, and why not? How would you like to be about three times as big as any of your neighbors – and for ten months out of every year be covered with a blanket of snow, with the wind whipping unmercifully around you all year round? (I also think Mt. Fuji has indigestion, although it has been getting better since about 1700 AD.) On top of all this, Mt. Fuji's head is so high that most of the time she can't see through the clouds and fog.

Although all these things are bad enough to give any self-respecting mountain a sour outlook on life, on top of all this there are those pesky humans who walk up and down her sides whenever the snow burns off. Fuji's problems are certainly enough to lead her to frustration, and I believe she has found her own ways to express herself. This is the conclusion I came to on that weekend when a group of us decided to try to scale her heights. This is the story of how she got even with me.

Climbing a mountain that is 12,365 feet tall, whose sides are covered with slippery ash, becomes increasingly more difficult as the air thins out, and



Back-breaking methods of farming

there are no longer trees and the blessed shade they offer. It almost felt as if the mountain was taunting us – challenging us to reach the top. And she won, I never did make it.



Beautiful scenery lures local artists

At 0700 Saturday morning we were all ready to depart, three GIs and five WACs. We had our musette bags packed with items to take care of the heat we would find at the base of the mountain, and the cold we would find at the top. We carried our own food. (The mess hall would not give us any, so we had just odds and ends bought at the PX.) We had a blanket because we would have to sleep somewhere on the way up. I had an extra pair of shoes, just in case, also a sweater, gloves and



A Japanese elder

field jacket because 12,000 plus feet would be rather chilly at night. And of course we all had canteens for water, as we can't drink Japanese water, it makes us sick. And then, there was all the necessary camera equipment; no such trip could be made without a camera and all its "gadgets."

There were many of the usual delays, such as having to wait for final authorization to take out the Special Service bus we had lined up; and then we had to wait for the PX to open so some could get food. With all this we left Yokohama at 10:30 am. We had a very congenial group and the

trip was fun. We drove southeast to the Yamanaka Hotel, took a brief rest, and then went six miles from there to Station No. 1, from whence we were to begin that trek up the mountain. We had been told that there would be guides we could hire to direct us and to carry our packs, for we never could have made it carrying all our own stuff. It was not until the second station that I did get a guide to carry my pack for 300 yen, which is six dollars. I guess that is less than pretty cheap because I certainly wouldn't carry anyone's pack up that mountain for less than the Hope Diamond.

On the way to the top there are ten major "stations" and innumerable substations. At the first one we each bought a "Fuji stick." These are long poles about six or seven feet high, sort of square and about one inch thick, made of a light-colored hardwood. Mine saved me from giving up many times; you just kind of hang on them and lean forward. At every stop the Japanese



Somewhere back there Fuji rises