

MTB SQUADRON 13, c/o Fleet Postoffice,  
San Francisco, California

10 December, 1943

Dear John:

I was delighted to receive your letter. Many times I have thought of you and have intended to write, but ~~1~~trouble I have never had is finding things to do. Enough of excuses, for it is too late. Now, as much as I should like to delight you with tales of the outside world (which, as I recall, interests you only as the reflection in the mirror held up to it) military policy puts a crimp on gossip.

I finally got around to reading the Education of Henry Adams, encountered a most familiar note in his account of his years at Harvard. It was the matter of discussion in class, his conclusion that only about ten percent of his students were capable of benefit and his concentrating on that ten percent, let the others catch what they may. I suspect that I have paraphrased this very badly, yet you should recognize the theme. There is no need to rehash Henry's discontent (though it still awaits definitive work - but not in a letter).

Myself, I must confess I should very well like an academic haven or backwater, either one. The height of my Naval ambition is to be assigned to a Hospital Corps School (preferably San Diego) as an instructor. My other vocational love is Pharmacy. This I discovered when I had to run a pharmacy for six months. The idea occurred to me the other day that I could at least try to apply my two years liberal arts for the nonessential credits, get credit for my Navy time for Laboratory hours, and thus concentrate on the courses essential to a BS(Pharmacy). Sounds like a good idea, might get through in wartime.

As I stipulated, those are occupational. I still read and write. I've knocked off a few lousy sonnets. Also bogged down in the middle of a very ambitious treatise.

A. Goeddel



Have you read Ilya Ehrenburg's "The Fall of Paris"? I thought it good, so would be interested in comments. Right now I am in the midst of "Darkness and the Deep" (Vardis Fisher), which is dedicated to the dire warning that the contented man makes no progress. I recall the debates in which I used to engage: Is happiness compatible with genius? The proposition that genius creates unhappiness seems absurd (about the time of the German Romanticists?). That discontent stimulates cerebration is more likely.

I solemnly swear that it was Fisher and not I that brought the topic of genius into this writing. Me, I have a lot of fun. Moreover, I am sincerely convinced that my wife is incomparable intellectually, esthetically, and in the culinary arts. My stepson, of course, shall be an eminent clarinetist. And my (post-war planned) daughter shall undoubtedly combine all the attributes of Sappho, Aspasia, and Penelope. What more could I ask -- than to be home? (Mrs. Goeddel is in San Diego, after having nested in Washington D.C., Boston, Newport R.I., and New Orleans.)

No, I was especially safe when the war (our immediate segment) broke out; I was in the same city with all the senators.

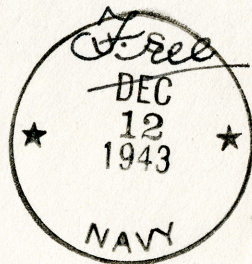
Today one of my patients told me that he did not think Lady Macbeth was really a nice girl. Look at the way she treated her dog: "Out, out damned Spot!"

Sincerely,

*Al*



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