

'Safer Than I Would Be Trying to Cross Court Street,' Writes Maj. F. W. Hodge From Africa



MAJ. F. W. HODGE

Scenery Is Beautiful, He Says in Two Letters to His Wife

"Don't worry about me unnecessarily, because most of the time I'll be safer than I would be trying to cross Court Street."

Thus writes Maj. F. Wallace Hodge to his wife, Mrs. Marion Hodge, 35 Orton Avenue, from "somewhere in Africa" where he is stationed as executive officer of a U. S. Army tank destroyer battalion. Mrs. Hodge is a teacher at Union-Endicott High School.

In two letters, dated Dec. 13 and 14, and just received by Mrs. Hodge, the major described the voyage overseas as "most pleasant" and the weather as "delightful."

"We were at Gibraltar for several hours and it's a wonderful sight," he wrote. "The mountains of Spain form a distant background that is beautiful. At night the wake of the ship was phosphorescent in the starlight. The North African coast is beautiful. I have never seen more beautiful scenery."

"Eddie Waters (the Rev. Edward Waters, a priest, formerly of Owego) was here to say mass yesterday and he is coming over for dinner today or tomorrow. He has lost some weight and looks fine. I feel grand myself and hope I have lost a little around the waist, though it's not from lack of sufficient good food."

Describing open-air Protestant services at the camp, the major wrote:

"It is a beautiful day and it was quite inspiring to be attending services and at the same time look out at country like the Sunday School pictures of the Holy Land, and natives going by dressed just as they were in the Old Testament, many of them riding on little burros."

Of his apartment, which he shares with other officers in a courtyard near the village school, he said:

"It is a yellow plastered building with black and white tiled floors and it is surrounded by a pink plastered wall. There are olive trees in the courtyard all full of ripe olives, but they're terrible before they are pickled. This is a wonderful country for vineyards. The tangerines here are delicious and the navel oranges are as large as small grapefruit."

"The dress of the natives," he added, "is very colorful, perfectly beautiful shades and all perfectly filthy. The whole country is full of color and keeps reminding me of the National Geographic Magazine."

"Yesterday we had a luncheon for the general. The local sheik came in a most beautiful costume and several of the local dignitaries in military garb."

"My French is coming in most helpfully and though I have a little difficulty I can make myself understood and also understand them if they don't talk too fast."

In one of the letters, written less than two weeks before Christmas, the major said:

"The favorite song around the battalion is 'I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas' and we're all going to do our darndest to make that come true in 1943. Although it will be impossible for us to have a white Christmas, there's a lot to be said for the weather here. It is like late May at home at its best."