

From: Sgt. John K. Toole  
U.S. 54 232 809  
Trng. Co. "A" - USATC (Carib)  
A. P. O. 851  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK



Mr. & Mrs. John Toole  
390 Audubon Street  
New Orleans (18) Louisiana  
U. S. A.

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Dear Parents,

Greetings on the Fourth of July. The day, as it has dawned here in the Caribbean, is hot and cloudy, and there is only a trace of the breeze which normally makes a Puerto Rican summer bearable. The duration of our current rainy spell is surprising. Every day brings more menacing clouds...and lightning and thunder, both of which are unusual here. At the main gate of Fort Buchanan, the insular government is building a new traffic interchange to handle the jammed automobiles constantly going to the extensive suburban developments that spread out over the rolling hills, cement box after cement box. This construction work coupled with the rain makes the main entrance an impassable quagmire that offers ankle-deep yellow slush. Therefore, getting on and off post is another new obstacle here. The construction company graciously built a small wooden shelter near the bus stop, complete with a bench, etc. But its yellow and blue walls have already been covered with the most appalling Spanish graffiti and obscenities, proving one thing, at least: Puerto Ricans carry more pencils than one would suspect. Spanish obscenities are often so overwhelming as to stultify the American mentality.

I have a three-day pass at the moment, unusual manna in these parts. Hoping to arrive home with some savings, I have stuck fairly close to mess hall meals and the barracks. However, I did spend Tuesday at the beach; luckily Tuesday was the only sunny day we've enjoyed in almost a month. The beach was the Army-Navy Beach in San Juan, a clean and well-maintained government area. There is a cyclone fence which extends across the beach and down in the water to the reefs to separate the Army-Navy Beach from an adjoining public beach frequented by "indigenous personnel." About two weeks ago, the indigenous personnel stoned the patrons of Army-Navy Beach for several minutes, cutting some people rather badly. A while ago the Army anchored a small float at the public beach to make swimming there more entertaining for the "natives." Soon the chain was cut by the indigenous personnel, and the float (really a small barge) drifted out to the high seas to hinder navigation. Thus, the case is the same as it was with the bus stop shelter: certain people are unable to accept favors.

I am awaiting my orders but imagine that I should be leaving the island sometime shortly after the first of August. I hope that everything is going well.

Love,

Key