

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Christmas in Korea

Young men go hunting in Korea just as they do here in this peaceful countryside, for Michael, our Marine, writes "I got in a little pheasant hunting yesterday. We checked out a couple of shotguns from Special Services and took off for the boondocks. We were out almost all day but did get a good reward for our labors.

"I bagged a nice rooster and a pigeon and the guy I went with got a nice hen and a big rooster. We couldn't get them cooked at the mess hall, so last night we had a pheasant fry in the tent. We had them all dressed before we asked the cook to fix them fit for eating, so all we had to do was cook them. We cut them up and rolled them in cracker crumbs and proceeded to cook them in our mess kits over the stove in our tent. They came out surprisingly good. Needless to say there isn't any left this morning."

Wouldn't it be a joy if parents could look on at a feast like that which Michael describes? At least for the moment those young fellows were not thinking about enemies and war.

"We went pheasant hunting again a few days ago," wrote this Marine later this month. "Really got a couple of beauties this time. We have the long tail feathers nailed up on the foot of the tent to admire. Our lieutenant was pretty pleased when we presented him with half of one. We would have given him more but then there would not have been enough for the guys in our tent."

But all is not a hunter's paradise in western Korea for after a lapse of a week or so, Michael related to his family why there had been this silence: "I suppose I should have written sooner but I've been running around here like a chicken with his head off and I can't do much of anything. They moved our switchboard and we have been splicing cables and laying new lines and changing phones and hooking up the switchboards and everything else in the book. This is the first chance I've had to sit down and write a letter in the past week and a half."

Well, Kwan, the little Korean boy who wanted a leather jacket got his wish. Our Michael noted the fact in a letter written from headquarters on Dec. 8: "I am enclosing a picture of Kwan in the leather jacket. On the

back of the photograph he wrote his name in Korean, English, Chinese Korean and Japanese Korean. On the front is a saying something like a Christmas greeting, 'Sayga-pyong-wha, nom-book-tong-ill.' Kwan wrote it so he is to blame if some of the instructors at the language school in Monterey question the spelling, etc."

Translated the greeting means "Peace for all and we strive for a United Korea." In western Korea, so Michael relates, they do not say "Merry Christmas," but greet friends with this wish: "Noon-oh-noon Christmas," which means: "May you have snow on Christmas."

The snow is getting a little deeper every day and the river is frozen over, which makes it mighty hard to take a shower. The pipes can't be thawed out until afternoon and then the place is too crowded for comfort.

"If there was one request I could make right now, it would be to be home for Christmas. But I will be there in thought if not in body. Two of your packages have arrived and I am very anxious to see what is in them but I am going to wait and then the day will seem more like Christmas. I hope Santa Claus is good to you and I think you have both been good enough to get the things you wish for. I'll make a snow man for you and take a picture of it to send home."

"We sure had a lot of excitement last night. Right in the middle of the movie the heater blew up and burned the mess hall right to the ground. It would happen during the best show we've had in months, too! It was 'Just for You' with Bing Crosby and Jane Wyman. It was a little cold at chow this morning but they should have a new hall built in a few days."