

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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How Michael Spent Christmas

Today we are hoping that there are many of our readers who would appreciate hearing more about the Christmas celebration in Korea and the way in which our Michael spent the day, so we are again referring to a number of his letters written during the holidays.

"Well, Christmas turned out surprisingly well. So that you may get a clear picture of what I did, I will start by explaining the events of the day just in the order in which they came about.

"First of all we went to church at the Headquarters' open theater. I went to Catholic mass, as Cardinal Spellman was holding high mass. It was very impressive, especially his sermon on why we are fighting in Korea. After that I went aback to our tent and opened my packages. Everything you sent was very useful. The salami and the crackers were eaten almost immediately along with some olives grandma had sent.

"I came to work at 10 o'clock and relieved the man who took my watch while I was at church. At 12:30 I went to noon chow which is our main meal of the day. This was the menu: turkey, mashed potatoes, shrimp cocktail, crackers, olives, dressing, pickles, stuffed celery, giblet gravy, cranberry sauce, coleslaw, hot rolls, fruit cake, apples, oranges, mixed nuts, coffee, and pumpkin pie.

"After this feast we went back to our tent, sang a couple of Christmas carols over a couple of cans of beer and had another snack from our Christmas boxes. At 2 o'clock we had a little party in our mess hall for 20 Korean school children.

"We had all chipped in a week ago to buy them some clothes and we presented them to the children after they had given us a little show to thank us. Surprising how kids over there are so much like those in the States. They had their fun and we sure did too.

"Taking pictures seemed to be the order of the day. We will show them here on our borrowed slide projector, then send them home.

"A woman's club in the States donated several packages for us and we had another party at the wire office, opening gifts. We received in those packages such things as books, cigarettes, magazines and stationery. It was not much, but it let us know that people at home

are still thinking about us and I think everyone here feels a little more sure about what he is fighting for. I know I do.

"Last night we had no lights and singing and horseplay went on till all hours. We really did have a nice celebration in spite of everything. Today was mostly policing up after last night's fun. We took down all our Christmas decorations and put them away for the less fortunate guys who will be here next year on Christmas, but I am hoping that no one will be here to use them. I hope that some day soon this will all be over and we can settle back and think of it as just a bad dream."

In another note written during the holidays Michael wrote of the visit of President-elect Eisenhower to his division. He described the historic visit somewhat like this: "I guess I neglected to tell you about the visit of our great President-elect Eisenhower to the First Marine Division. I was on the switchboard that morning and the air strip he landed on was right across the road from the van. We saw the whole proceedings and he drove by us on his way to the general's quarters.

"I have never seen so many guards in one place since I have been in the Marines. Also there were several Saberjets and some French P-51 fighters guarding his plane as it flew in. The band was there to greet him with a few songs. I felt sorry for the guys in the band having to stand out in the snow at 8 degrees weather.

"We have been busy building decks for some of the tents around the area that haven't had any. We try to make things as comfortable as possible for that helps to make up for the things we cannot have. There are a few things that I am going to do when I get home that I have missed over there, such as sitting in a comfortable chair, to have a nice steak dinner on a plate with real silver and a BIG glass of milk."