

10/1/70

Dear Mary,

As the enclosed, written before breakfast this a.m. (and forgotten when I went to P.O.) shows, I had an uneasy feeling about Jimmy. From your letter, by the time you get this, you will know what the situation is. As Buck's experience in the Army has undoubtedly reminded him, meningitis is not as uncommon there as civilians believe.

Mary, Buck will also remember, even if he was older than than Jimmy now is, that homesickness is not uncommon. In Jimmy's case it is undoubtedly because of the recent sheltering and the special problem and possible consequent insecurity. Just let the illness pass and the rest will be much less difficult.

It will serve no point by the time this reaches you, when you will have learned the diagnosis, but perhaps it will amuse you to know that my first army interest was so bad a cold they hospitalized me (when my family doctor raised hell, after seeing me when I slipped away for a weekend and Lil pooned him) and kept me so much in bed I didn't enjoy the relatively liberal privileges accorded pneumonia patients! Army cold can be that bad. They called that one "nasal pharyngitis". Never heard of it before or after, but I do know that by the time I got back to barracks all my hidden liquor was gone. When I asked about not being allowed out of the sack to sweep under my own bed while the pneumonia patients were, they actually told me that most pneumonia was a simple matter but this thing that I considered so simple was really a very serious one and that it required extreme caution, so many complications were possible. So, the point is, you gotta be a medic to understand.

If it is meningitis, you'll not be allowed near him. The quarantine is quite strict and of three weeks duration, as I recall it. I suggest that if you have not left by the time you get this, and I'll not forget it in the a.m. again, you phone first. You may find the time you are there is of no value to him and might preclude your presence at a time it might be a joy to him. Excuse my butting in, but especially if he is homesick, it may try him more to know you are there and he can't see you....I think the regulations will be the same, and your closest military post can give you an accurate representation. And by the way, if it is meningitis, do you want to get it or be carriers? That would not help him a bit. Cool it, folks, until it is time...Seems to me I remember large bonfires at each quarantined barracks, where everything was burned, not even washed. It is not for playing with without a real understanding and official approval...We do look forward to hearing from you and hope you haven't pulled all of Buck's hair out by then. If it is only a cold, what about that coming up here in October you talked about? This is October.

Best,

4406 Holland
Dallas, Texas 75219
September 28, 1970

TO ALL OUR CONCERNED FAMILY AND FRIENDS:

As most of you know, we have had many problems with our youngest son, James Lee, since the first of this year. He was forced to drop out of college in February because of an illness and when he did not go back in the summer, he was drafted. He left for Fort Ord, California, September 17th, two days before his 20th birthday.

Jimmy has been calling us almost every day. We had never known he could be so homesick. He called us Saturday night and said he was ill. We thought he was just getting more homesick and tried to cheer him up, telling him he would be fine. Then yesterday afternoon, we received a call from Fort Ord. He is in the hospital and it sounds like meningitis. They haven't diagnosed it definitely yet, but there is an epidemic of meningitis at the camp and he has all the symptoms... We will probably fly out there to see about him Friday, if not before.

Buck and I have just been so lax in keeping up our correspondence since Jimmy has been ill that I am taking this means of informing all of you that we think of you and love you but have had so much on our minds that we have not shown it very well...

Dearest Lil ^{and} Harold: *Mary Ferrell*

It seems it will never end! Jimmy was actually enjoying his training even though he was terribly homesick and calling home sometimes twice a day - If they are wrong in their suspicions, and it turns out to be a "cold", all will be well again - But, if they are right and it is meningitis, we are going out there and stay until he's out of danger - I'll let you know as soon as we know -

Love
Mary

Rather misleading to