

SO YOU'RE GOING ON FURLough

The first step, of course, is to get the furlough. This is easy. Simply walk into the orderly room, seize the first sergeant by the collar and loudly demand 10 days. Your leisure hours in the Guard House should be spent planning the happy days ahead. Upon your release in six months, your furlough papers will be ready, as regulations provide for semi-annual leaves of absence "for the purpose of travel, healthful recreation, and diversion."

1. TRAVEL. Purchase a round-trip ticket for Frog Level or wherever your home town happens to be. Unless, naturally, you live in Brooklyn^{* THEN GO AS FAR AWAY FROM BROOKLYN}. On the train every seat will be occupied, as several other guys have also heard about furloughs. You won't mind standing in the aisle for a day or so since this will result in a complicated case of varicose veins, eventually causing reclassification to limited service.

At Frog Level you will be greeted by a group of surly MPs and a driving rain (I think there is an Army Regulation authorizing driving rains during furloughs.) Your home is two miles from the station through swampland, and of course you forgot to bring your raincoat. But you strike out on foot into the storm, which brings you to

2. HEALTHFUL RECREATION. The less said about healthful recreation the better.

3. DIVERSION. You float into the house, drenched to your dog tags, looking like a wirephoto of the last man off the Yorktown. Quivering with incipient pneumonia, you sit down to your first meal at home, a banquet complete except for meat, potatoes, butter, sugar, coffee, and a few other rationed incidentals. After a few mouthfuls, the cold porridge is snatched away, and the family settles down for the Furlough Inquisition or the GI Quiz.

You have completed your third detailed description of Army routine and are patiently explaining to little Willie that latrine orderlies are not eligible for flying pay, when suddenly you collapse. Disgustedly, the family drags you to bed on the living room sofa. Your room has been rented to a defense worker for the duration.

On the sixth day you regain consciousness. The doctor announces you may live. You are still too weak to leave the house, so the local news is relayed to you by Willie. You learn the poolroom has been converted into an air-raid shelter; the old gang has been wiped out by the draft board; your girl has gotten herself engaged to a welder who has been showing her a time-and-a-half during your absence.

On the seventh day you slink back to camp and plead with the mess sergeant to be allowed to spend the remaining furlough time in the kitchen. The mess sergeant, who was once on furlough himself, will understand. He will not refuse. If you hear of any talk of a proposed plan to abolish the furlough and substitute three weeks of KP in its place, ignore it. Another latrine rumor and nothing but wishful thinking.