

Morning View Kentucky
3 October 1957

Hello Mr. McCarthy,

As the Asian flu swirls from continent to continent with the speed of rumor, I am following its course with more than mild interest.

I think I know more about Asian flu than anybody. I am firmly convinced I have had it six or eight times -- I am not sure exactly how many because I didn't keep count.

Back in December of 1943, there was a flu epidemic at our air bases in this country. Some were briefly quarantined, and others, such as my base, came very close to it.

Everyone was aching and coughing. Consequently, when, while weathered-in at another field, I encountered some newly-arrived lend-lease Russians, I was not surprised that they were beset by ferocious coughs. One officer could read English and write it, and even speak a little, but he could not understand the spoken word. He was curious about our organization and I spent some time with pen and paper, printing answers to his questions.

Upon the arrival of good weather, I finished my trip, and returned to my base, arriving there with a wild fever, aches that made the slightest movement misery, a strange sore throat, and a frantic cough.

I reported to the overflowing base hospital where the harried medics were battling with flu cases far too numerous for their facilities. When I said flu to the tired officer at the desk, they took my temperature then gave me a saliva test like a race horse. Apparently the Medical Corps was just beginning to experiment with flu shots, and as part of their research they were having the flu of this epidemic tested and recorded as Type A or Type B.

They sent me to bed in my barracks, the hospital being full of those more seriously ill than I, told me to phone if I got worse, and to return to the hospital on the morrow. Gave me the standard 2-4-4. Two sulpha pills every four hours and four quarts of fruit juice a day. The sulpha wouldn't combat the flu but it would prevent complications.

When I returned to the hospital the next day, they all paused to look at me with interest. A corpsman settled me in a corner and took my temperature and blood for a blood test before I knew what was happening. I guessed it was going to die or something.