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May

Letter 351, 1945-05-02
Letter 352, 1945-05-04
Letter 353, 1945-05-07
Letter 354, Letter from May Sherwood, 1945-03-27
Letter 355, Letter from Jimmie, dated 1945-04-16
Letter 356, 1945-05-07
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June

Letter 368, 1945-06-03
Letter 369, 1945-07-07 (perhaps June)
Letter 370, 1945-06-10
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August

Letter 385, 1945-08-01
Letter 386, 1945-08-03
Letter 387, 1945-08-03
Letter 388, 1945-08-10
Letter 389, 1945-08-13?
Letter 390, 1945-08-14
Letter 391, 1945-08-19
Letter 392, 1945-08-24
This letter seems to be Warner’s first right after being inducted. He was obviously transported from Danbury to Ft. Devens, MA. His talk about hundreds of men in transit suggests the gearing up for war. He focuses on the essentials of living: eating, hygiene, sleeping, cold, health. Overriding all these is the wonder about where Warner will be sent next.
Dear Mother & Dad,

We arrived here [Ft. Devens] about 1:00, but I’m just getting a chance to write. (abt. 4:00). It doesn’t seem so very bad so far. We have just made our beds and they don’t seem to be expecting us to do anything, so I have a few minutes to write.

All we have received so far is a raincoat, towel & toilet articles. We have stood around in the freezing cold for hours.

My cold seems to be much better, & my sore throat has disappeared. However, I do have a slight cold in my ear.

I hear we have to get up at 3:00 in the morning, but I hope they are kidding us. There are a few fellows in our barracks who have been here for several days but most of us are from Danbury.

They tell us we are to have turkey tonight. It sounds good doesn’t it? Incidentally, we also have received our bedding & learned how to make the beds.

Some say that we are likely to leave tomorrow or we may be here for weeks.

Several hundred came in today. Several hundred also went out.

Well, I had better close... for we are to eat at...

Love,
Son

Don’t write here. I’ll write again as soon as I can. T.W.

Letter 2, 1942-12-05 (back to Table of Contents)

Saturday A.M.

Dear Mother & Dad,

We’re still here today & so we know we will not leave until Monday morning, perhaps not even then. They are coming & going by the hundreds here every day. We received no jobs to do this morning & so I am writing this at the camp library.

If my clothes have not already arrived they will do so in a day or two, probably by the time you receive this letter.

We have been extremely busy for two days & nights—usually not getting to bed until 12:00 or 1:00 in the morning. We have taken our tests, been classified & received our clothes and so we can leave at any time. You never know when it will be.

The draft board in Danbury did not send the correct classification for Hopkins & I, and so we caused quite a bit of trouble. I think it is all straightened out now, but I am not sure. I think that was rather a dirty trick for Treadwell to pull.

My shoes will not be in the package of clothes for I am keeping them for use here. The shoes the give us are very, very comfortable and so I guess I need not have worried. We finally got our clothes abt. 12:00 last night. Everything fits very well.
I have no idea where I will be sent, for they don't tell you a thing. I hope Grandma is feeling better. I suppose you are visiting her every day. For goodness sake don't worry about me for everything is going fine. My right arm was very sore yesterday from one of the injections, but it is much better today. The vaccination for small pox seems to be taking very little effect as yet. I hope it takes and yet doesn't form a larger spot.

The weather here is terrifically cold, but now that we have our uniforms we don’t mind so much. I’ll write again when I have time but you still hadn’t better write here, for I am likely to be moved at any time & most likely will.

Perhaps I shall be given some sort of teaching job, but that is only a guess. They said I made out very well on the examinations but I was so sleepy when I took it that I could hardly keep my eyes open.

I still haven't had time to write any thank-you notes, but I am going to try to write some this afternoon if they don't discover I am not busy & put me to work.

Did Dad tell you that Mrs. Meder & Doris were down to the Court House Friday to see us off?

We, so long now, until I have a chance to write again.

Son

Letter 3, 1942-12-07 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 1

Monday (at 4:40 in the morning)

Dear Mother & Dad,

Just a line to let you know that we are supposed to be shipped some time today. We have already turned in our bedding and are packing our bags. Of course, it is not certain that all of us will be moved but we probably shall be. We have no idea where we are going. I shall write as soon as I have time after I arrive or on the way if possible. Everything is O.K. Don’t worry at all.

Love,
Son

Letter 4, 1942-12-07 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 1

K Co., 350th Infantry
88th Division
Camp Gruber, Okla.
December 11, 1942

Dear Mother & Dad,
This is the first time I have had to write since I left Devens. Wouldn’t you know they would send me way out here where we can’t get home for months? Well, anyway, here I am and I have seen a great deal of the country on the way out.

I told you in another letter that the Draft Board did not send my correct classification to Devens but that I thought I had straightened it out. Apparently, however, they just said it would be O.K. & then did as they pleased anyhow. So here I am at Oklahoma in the infantry. Don’t worry though. I have already seen the chaplain & he is going to see what he can do to get me in the Medical Corps. If he does not do this, or rather cannot, I’ll need a copy of the board’s classification of me etc., but I’ll let you know if I need them.

Don’t give my address to anyone else for a while because I am hoping it will soon be changed and I had rather not be receiving letters at the incorrect address.

When you have the chance call Georgie Robinson & ask her if she has yet received the address of William Lewis. He was a young fellow who had been living with her before he was drafted. I became quite friendly with him & we made plans to get each other’s addresses. Don’t give her mine yet.

Will you go to a news dealer in town to have him get an Indianapolis paper [for] December 8th & 9th? If you succeed, save [it] for me, for there might be some news in it that I want to save.

I hope you are feeling fine. Please [don’t] worry about me, for I am feeling [....] If I felt that you were sitting [around] worrying it would make it even harder [for me] than it is. Maybe we will be [home] sooner than we all expect. Just pray we do.

At present, all several hundred that [came] from Devens with us are rather down-[hear]ted because they do not look forward to [being] in the infantry. I just have the feeling I’ll be moved to a different section of camp in a short time. Pray that I do.

These are a few of the articles I will be wanting soon. Do not send [them] yet, but you might be getting them ready. The sewing kit (fix it up as we planned) wash cloth

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My writing case—khaki one
More air mail stamps—(maybe you can get my letters much sooner if I use them)
The Danbury News-Times (don’t begin them at once—but you might send several issues in one bundle)—if there are items in the papers you would like to cut out, do so and then send me Morris’ papers.
Fruit juices—maybe
[shave] brush
I hope Grandma is feeling better. Is she home from the hospital yet? Give her my best regards & tell her I hope she will soon be her own self again.

Get Jim’s address from Miss Harrison & send his Christmas present to him without waiting to hear from me. Don’t forget to finish my Christmas shopping for me & do the wrapping. I put two or three small wrapped Christmas packages under my bed for you & dad. I wish I had had time to get more but I just didn’t. You might buy for dad the collection of stories called Bedside Esquire if you think he would enjoy it.

On the way out of here we followed a route something like this. Instead of doing this, I’ll enclose a map & list of places I made on the way out. You can get a general idea of the route we followed & what we saw. I now know what the western plains are like—flat-flat-a little bump-a clump of trees-& more flat-flat. Oh, for a glimpse of the hills of New England. Save
this slip for me, will you?

The first things that the fellows from N. England asked about was when we can get a furlough & how much it would cost to get home. A furlough won't be coming up for months, as I see it, and the round trip will cost abt. $50.00.

As yet I haven't learned just where in Oklahoma we really are, but I do know that we are about 60 miles from Tulsa.

The chaplain seems to think I [___] in line for officers training & if I might take it if it is in the medical line. That would keep me busy for quite some time.

I had a really nice talk with the chaplain last night (we arrived yesterday) and feel much better about my situation.

I'll have to stop now but will write soon again. You write too, won't you?

Love,
Son

[This appears to be the list of places through which TW traveled from Devens to Gruber:

Ayer
Fitchberg
Orange
Deerfield
Greenfield
Hoosic Tunnel
North Adams
Hoosic Falls—supper
Troy (?) – blackout
Albany
Fort Plain
St. Johnsville
Utica
Syracuse
Rochester
Buffalo
Cleveland
Marion [?]
Bellefontaine—highest pt. between Allegheny & Rockies
Parker, Ind. Muncie-derailed
Indianapolis
St. Louis
Kansas City-Mo.
A sketched map follows.]
Dear Mother and Dad,

I'm just dropping a few lines to show you the new stationery I bought. Pretty snappy, what!

The weather out here is not bad at all. I've taken off the heavy underwear they gave us at Devens and put on the summer underwear instead. Right now the weather is about like that of late spring. They tell us that in the summer it gets extremely hot here, but I hope we'll be away from here by then. When it rains the grounds are thick with mud. When the water dries off the grounds are just like a dust bowl, no grass, no trees.

This camp is a new one, having been opened only last July. The land was once part of an Indian reservation, and I bet the Indians were glad to get rid of it. It is still growing very rapidly and it is expected that when it is complete it will be the largest camp in the country. The barracks are two storied affairs, very well built, and having hot air heating. I've seen only a very small part of the camp so far, for it is extremely large. There are several large theaters, very well built, canteens, etc. I can buy such things as soap, shaving cream, shaving powder and the like more cheaply than you can at home, for all the profits from the P.X. (Post Exchange, to you) are used for lowering the price of many of the articles that are sold. For example, last night I bought about a pint of good ice cream for twelve cents. Now don't you wish you were here?

Since I wrote the last few lines I have moved into the new barracks. Most of the fellows in this section of the camp are from New England, New York, New Jersey, California, & Texas. There are even a few Mexicans, probably from Texas.

Be saving some old wash clothes to send to me later so I can use them for shoe polishing.

As yet we have done no Training at all, but we are expected to begin on Monday. It looks like hard work, but if everything goes as plans I may not be with this group forever. Some of the older men stationed here have been transferred to Windsor Locks, Conn. after completing their training to act as a cadre.

My small rubber bag was ripped when our train derailed in Indiana. All thirteen cars were off the track, but only one was turned over on its side. The other cars were cross ways on the rails & even on the next track. I was in the front car following the tender and fortunately the weight of the engine kept us from being overturned. Our coaches must have held up traffic for hours, for the cars had to be removed, the ties replaced and the bent rails replaced or straightened. After the third car broke away from us we bumped along on the rails and over the ties for over 300 yds. in a matter of a few seconds. Everyone used good judgement and flattened themselves on the seats and floor. Not one was seriously hurt. A miracle if you ask me! It's an experience none of us will ever forget.

Please don’t be worried if I don't write every day because I probably won't have time. We get up about 5:45 and most of us seem to be free evenings. As yet we have no bed check & so apparently we can stay up until about 11:00 if we care to, but I don't imagine that we will be wanting to do so in a few days.
I have met some swell fellows from Massachusetts & Connecticut & we have been going around together.

I sent a card showing my new address to Grandma & Ed, you, & Aunt Onie yesterday, because we had to send out three cards. Tell them not to use the address yet for I am still holding on to the possibility of my being moved. Just pray that I do for then I will be in something I think I will enjoy. Most of the fellows have, especially those who have good jobs or a good education are quite disappointed & discouraged by being placed in the infantry. They feel they could be doing something much more valuable by working in another field. I guess we were just unfortunate to have been sent to Devens when we did for they needed to have this camp filled and so sent us. If I only had been a trained mechanic or studied in some particular scientific field, I might have fared better.

I must get this letter off soon so I must close now. Remember me to all.

Love,
Son

Letter 6, 1942-12-0? (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 1

Dear Mother & Dad,

You see, I can't even keep track of the date. They are really keeping us busy—drilling, drilling & drilling. We get up at 6:30, eat at 7:00 & begin drill at 8:00; eat at 12:00, begin drill again at 1:00—finish at 5:00, eat at 6:00, lights out at 9:30, but we can stay up as late as we wish (apparently)

I've been hoping to hear from you but I suppose it takes a long time for mail to travel across the country. You might as well give the others my address because I can make plans to get my mail if I am transferred. I was talking to the chaplain last evening. He has given my name to the personnel [sic] department and he thinks I may hear from them within a week or so. I'll still have to take basic training, but at least I'll be working in something I'll enjoy better than this. Of all the men here, I know only two or three who don't want to be changed. We have everything from dental mechanics to warehouse managers in our company—all in the infantry. Many of the fellows here are either about my age or about 30-45 years old. Many are really old, one fellow is completely bald, not one single hair on his head.

You might send me some of these things when you have a chance: writing portfolio, sewing kit, a washcloth, air mail stamps, show brush. O.Do.R.O.No, Find out how Mrs. Morris made that concentrated lemon syrup & if it doesn't take any sugar here and if you think you can send it without having it break (which I doubt) you might send some of that.

When you send any mail, you might add my serial number 31250784 for a little while to help direct the mail correctly. Save this number, 31250784, for it is mine & mine alone & you
might need it for my address at some other time. It would help locate if I am moved suddenly.

I am enclosing a small bookmark I bought out here. I suppose it is Indian made but I don’t
know. I thought you might like it.

If you can find a good map of Oklahoma, especially of cities and also mountains, vallies,
etc. I might have one in my maps in attic; if you have time will you look and see. A small map
of the whole U.S. or of western states would be interesting.

Will you send me Jim’s address. I hope you have done all my Christmas shopping by now,
but if I know you and your last minute rushes I bet you haven’t.

If fruit juices don’t weigh too much send me some small cans of orange juice etc. A can
opener such as used for opening beer cans would help—(they don’t pull off the top, they just
make a hole in the lid)

I must close now for it is almost time for the lights to go off and I can’t write in the dark.
Write soon, won’t you?

Love,
Son

Letter 7, Thursday evening (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 1

Dear Mother & Dad,

I’m the envy of practically everyone in my old barracks for you see I have finally been
moved. I am now in the medical detachment—attached to the 350th Infantry. In other words
we really are part of the medical corps attached to the infantry.

Will you send me some coat hangers, (metal) if you can. I need them badly & I can’t get
them here. A small khaki bag to put in my regular barracks bag would help. However, don’t
try to send everything at once.

Well, I feel much better than I did. They tell me we study for about 3 days (or more) a
week & drill etc. the rest. Much better than the regular infantry where you drill all the while.
Everyone wants to change with me. There is just a small group here that is beginning. The
others have been here quite a while but they all seem very nice. One of the new fellows is a
graduate of Stanford University. I think I’ll get along fine.

I wish you would write. I haven’t heard a word from home since I left. I wish you would
write. I imagine you have but the mails have been slowed up. You can said [sic] the paper
here too if you wish.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

It certainly seemed good to hear from you. It seemed like ages since I wrote to you before any mail came. As yet I have received only one letter, but I know there is another one somewhere in the camp being transferred to my new barracks. I expect it to reach me sometime this afternoon.

Will you be sure to give my correct address to the others in Danbury. (Grandma, Aunt Onie, Martha, Divy, Miss Harrison, Mr. Sillars, Mrs. Meder [to give to those at school], etc.) and to Mildred. I felt I was going to be moved, but since I wanted to thank them for my gifts I sent many of them my old address.

I certainly feel much better about what I am doing now. The group here is very congenial (many are middle aged men) but it is a little hard to get well acquainted with them for they have been together for so long. They are all very nice, though. Many of them are from Georgia, Tennessee, etc. Real southerners you know.

The food is very much better than it was in Co. K. Before we used to have messes of junk thrown at us. However, today, here we had pork chops, mashed potatoes, gravy, fresh vegetable salad, bread, butter, jelly and coffee or an orange drink. Not bad, what?

The lieutenants and other officers which we have are an altogether different sort than those in the infantry. They have been well educated and know something about treating you as a human being. And best of all, they don’t swear at you with every other word. You can’t imagine what a difference it makes in the way the fellows react to their work.

We are to study physiology, anatomy, first aid, bandaging, etc., materia medica, and most of the lectures are given by officers who are doctors. They know their stuff and they probably will give us plenty to do. Many of the new fellows are not too interested in this work but a few of us are. I’m going to try to do my very best and maybe I’ll have a chance for advancement. Some have the opportunity to go on and study to be surgeons assistants and do other similar work. Our preliminary course is to be ten weeks long. Some of the others have had a seventeen weeks course but ours has been cut down. After the ten weeks are up I have no idea what we are to do, perhaps more study, perhaps go right in and work with the infantry. As yet we do not have guns and the older men do not have them either. Apparently we do not use them. You can be sure I am not disappointed. However, while I was still in Company K. I learned how to take a rifle apart and put it together again (some job!) and began to learn the manual of arms.
We have done very little here all day today (Saturday) but clean the barracks for inspection. I'm writing this about 2:00 in the afternoon, and probably I won't be busy for the rest of the day. Many of the fellows in the infantry thoroughly dislike those in the medicals because they say we have such an easy job. We really don't, though. We (eventually) will have to march just as far as they do, with a full pack and our first aid equipment taking the place of their rifle. We also learn to find direction by compass, pitch our shelter halves. Apparently we do have more free time than the others do, though.

I just bought a khaki laundry bag that I can use to keep separate some of my things. Because of the metal shortage we have no lockers and so we have to keep most of our things in our barracks bags. It's not at all convenient.

I have taken out a five thousand dollar insurance policy coating sixty five cents a thousand per month. I think it was a wise investment. If I wish to, I believe I can increase the policy at any time I want to up to ten thousand dollars.

In regard to dependency payments by the government, I suggest we wait a little while and see what develops. There are no complications about a wife and children, but for parents there is an investigation at home, & a paper to be signed by two witnesses saying you need the help. It's a lot of red tape. Perhaps if we wait and see how dad feels, and how soon it will be before he is working again it will be better.

Don't worry about Christmas presents. There is very little I can use besides those article I have suggested you send me. Maybe you had better wait awhile about sending those juices. I know I tell you one thing in one letter and another in another, but conditions change.

I'll be sending my shoes home to you before long, because the only kind I can wear here must have a plain toe or just one ridge across the top. [drawing of toe of shoe] Mine are a little too fancy!! The commander of this camp used to run a boys military school, so they tell me, and he is trying to run this in the same way. We even have to wear gloves whenever we go out!!

If you don't hear from me again before Christmas, I want to wish you all a very, merry Christmas. I'm not planning to send any cards this year because by the time I get them it will be too late to receive them. I hope you are still having a tree this year. Write again whenever you can.

Love,
Son

Thanks for the stamps.
Keep my classification card for me. I'd rather not have it here.

I think all packages are either inspected here or at the camp when they are send, but I am not sure.

[Sunday Messenger leaflet for Dec. 13, 1942 is enclosed. The benediction says: “Christmas is drawing near. Many of us will not be able to go home. While the day may not seem as usual, yet we all must remember that whatever our feelings the Christmas season is one wherein we shower gifts on others. DO YOU KNOW SOME SOLDIER WHO HAS NO ONE TO REMEMBER HIM? Why don't you and your folks remember him?]
Dear Mother & Dad,

Most likely it will be Christmas eve when this reaches you, so a merry Christmas to you all. I imagine it will be turkey you are enjoying, and I do wish I were having some of it. The P.X. and chapel are decorated with wreathes and Christmas trees and the like. Much mistletoe grows around here on the trees and that is used also. I have seen none of it growing because we have not yet been out in the hills (and there are some hills around here, I have discovered. The camp is in the Cookston (sp?) Hills where many of the most notorious gangsters of recent times have hung out.) I miss the snow you have been getting. You would get it when I am not home to enjoy the skiing.

For goodness sake but sure the others know of my change of address. I'm going crazy trying to keep track of my mail in two places. No packages have arrived so far. I really don't need very much and it probably would be better to have any packages that are sent in the future spaced out so they do not arrive at once.

Will you buy me some brillo or steel wool or the like to use to clean aluminum. I can't buy any here and I'll be needing it soon. A fairly small piece of soft cheese cloth would also come in hand. I have plenty of razor blades so far. I'll let you know later about the razor sharpener.

I'm planning to go to the Christmas eve service at the chapel on the 24th. I'm enclosing a program we had a week ago. I thought you might enjoy seeing it.

I have found a large map of the U.S. here at the camp and discovered that I really am not much farther away from home than if I were in Florida. It just seems that way. It is really just about as far from here to Los Angeles as it is from here to Connecticut. And I thought we were practically on the Pacific coast!!

I received the two dollars safely, as well as Jim's letter. Thanks a lot. I haven't as yet used any money from my money belt so I am making out very well. However, you really spend more than you think you do, adding up all the nickels and dimes. There isn't much to do at night but study, and gamble (which I don't do but which a good many of the fellows are doing right now) and go to the P.X. and buy candy, and ice cream, and soda and beer and stand around and talk, or go to the movies or read. I've been to the show three times already. We get the latest shows at a very early date. There are several theaters in the camp and we can easily catch a particular movie in one if we miss it at the other. I can keep busy.

My Red Cross text book would help, especially if you include the small pamphlet on war gases. Don't try to send everything at once. Spread them out. Send to Barnes and Noble in New York (I imagine a catalogue is on my desk or in the maple container by the bed) and order a college review or college outline of anatomy & physiology and send it to me. It probably will cost abt. A dollar or a dollar and a half.
I may call you up some evening or Sunday for a few minutes just to talk to you all. Probably it will be on a Sunday. If and when I call I'll reverse the charges, for it is very difficult to have exactly the right change handy to pay for the call. It will cost a little over $3.00 for 3 minutes. Don't begin to stay in evenings or Sundays just to wait for a call, for if I don't get you at first I can always try at another hour. On Sundays I'm free practically all day up to eleven in the evening. I don't imagine I'll try to call Christmas because it is very difficult to get to use the few phones that are available.

It is beginning to rain hard here now. We have been free practically all afternoon, because the grounds are so muddy.

We receive more consideration here in the medics than do most of the other groups. The officers are much nicer and intelligent than many of the others.

I'm leaving now to see if I have any mail. I'd like to get some before long.

I'm afraid I must close now for I have to go to the supply room to get the insignia for my coats. Do let me hear from you soon.

Love,
Son

Letter 10, 1942-12-23 (back to Table of Contents)

Dear Mother & Dad,

For goodness sake, please let anyone who is planning to write to me have my correct address. My mail is still coming to Co. K. and I'm being driven to distraction trying to keep track of it.

In regard to the advertisement about the bag you sent me, it looks very good but I don't know when I'll ever need to use it. You can use your own judgment about buying it, but there is no hurry.

Give Grandma my best wishes and tell her I'm glad she is feeling better. By the way, where is Roger now?

I had a letter from Mildred today and it was good to hear from her. She is planning to visit Danbury at New Year's. I hope she will be able to make it, but I understand that civilian travel by trains has been restricted for the holiday season.

I've received the air mail stamps safely. I'm glad you sent them, for I haven't found where I can buy them here.

If you have a map of Oklahoma perhaps you can locate where we are. We are very near Braggs, Okla., and within a few miles of Muskogee (?) (sp.?) There are some hills around
here, and the sunrises and sunsets are extremely beautiful. I imagine it is the dust in the air that refracts the sunlight and makes the sky so colorful.

I would like to hear more abt. what is going on at home. Let's hear the news. I'll write again soon.

Love,
Son

Letter 11, 1942-12-24 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 1

United States Army
Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

Camp Gruber, Okla.
A.P.O. #88
December 24, 1942

Dear Mother & Dad,

Well, its Christmas eve and here I am. You can bet I’m thinking of you at home and wishing I were with you. I hope you're having as good a time as you can—Christmas tree and all. No snow here at all, and quite warm. The buildings are very nicely decorated but it is hard to get the Christmas spirit.

I just came from a Christmas party a the day room, given by all the fellows here. I'm afraid it wasn't exactly the kind of party I'd enjoy—so many of them trying to be gay by drinking as much beer as they could (however, this type was very few, I'm glad to say). I ate some cake, and nuts & oranges and some soda, and then left. It wasn't my idea of Christmas eve, and I didn't want to spoil my Christmas spirit by staying.

Some other fellows and I are going to church tonight to the Christmas Eve service & perhaps we'll make it to the Catholic mass at midnight. I'll feel more at home with them.

I had a nice letter from Martha today & a note from Mary Anita & Phoebe. It certainly was good to hear from them. I hope I'll be hearing from you soon again. None of my packages have arrived yet but I certainly hope they will be here by tomorrow. A good many of the fellows’ packages have not come, probably held up in the mails. We have had this afternoon off, and will have all day tomorrow and probably the whole week end.

Some of the fellows from the Medics who have been here for several weeks have had the chance to go away to school and study to be surgeons assistants. A few of us are trying to have that chance when our group finishes its basic training. I hope so.

I'm leaving for church now. Will write again soon.

Love,
Son
United States Army
Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

Camp Gruber, Okla.
A.P.O. #88
December 26, 1942

Dear Mother & Dad,

I have a good many things I want to ask you about so I'll begin with them. Forget about the khaki bags. I have found some here at camp that I bought. If you are sending only three or four hangers, will you try to send three or four more? If it doesn’t cost too much I'd like to receive the Danbury paper now and then. Will you send me a few more aspirin, about a dozen handkerchiefs, three or four sets of undershirts, three or four sets of undershorts and also white shorts (underwear)?

See if you can get this book to send to me. You had better send C.O.D. & then get it too to me as soon as you can

Medical Soldiers Handbook
Pub. By
100 Telegraph Bldg.
Harrisburg, Pa.
Copyright Aug. 1942

I have no idea of the cost, but it won’t be very much.

The packages or insured letter have not arrived as yet. They probably are in the post officer here, but it is so packed that they have not been able to distribute them. I’m looking forward to getting it in a day or so.

I’ve written to Helen giving her my best wishes.

Another thought! I need some bath towels, (2 white ones will do) and another small face towel.

I’ll write soon again. I’m going to bed now to try to get rid of my cold.

Love Son
Dear Mother and Dad,

I've just finished an excellent turkey dinner and I'm enclosing a menu that each of us had. We eat with the Headquarters Company and that therefore explains why their name is given instead of ours. We didn't have everything on the menu, but practically everything.

I received two letters from you in this morning's mail but no packages as yet. It seems that the mails must be mixed up, for a good many of the fellows have not received the packages they know are on the way. They probably will arrive tomorrow.

I'm also sending you a Christmas card the chaplain sent to all the fellows. The cut shows what the chapels here at the camp look like (without the shrubbery). You will also find a program for this morning's Christmas service. I also went to church last night and then to the Catholic mass at midnight to hear their Christmas music. I've kept busy all right.

It certainly must really be cold, with all that sub-zero weather. Today the temperature is so high that we went about with just our jackets on. So far there has been only one day that can be classed as cold.

You asked about our meals. Well, they are nothing to brag about—not good but not really bad either. I'm afraid your cooking has spoiled me.

It's good to hear that Grandma is feeling much better. I certainly wish I could have been home with you to eat Christmas dinner, but it just wasn't to be. Maybe soon, though. I hope you like the pin I bought for you at Tucks and the scouring pad.

I want to get some other letters this afternoon so I'm going to close now. I'll probably go to the movies tonight. Write soon.

Love,

Son

P.S. I'm certainly surprised by pleased to hear about Helen. I'm going to write to her and give her my best wishes today if I have time.

T.W.
United States Army
Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

Camp Gruber, Okla.
A.P.O. #88
December 27, 1942

Dear Mother & Dad,

Don’t worry about my receiving your letters, for I think I have received all you have sent. As yet my packages have not reached here. In the letter I got today, you said the package contained towels. I didn’t realize that when I sent you the letter yesterday, asking you to send me a good many things. Forget my second request for the towels. The card with the five dollars in it also came today & it certainly was good to get it.

I sent my classification card back to you because by the time it arrived I didn’t need it. Apparently you haven’t realized that by getting in the medical detachment, even in the infantry, I have been placed in the type of duty for which I asked. Our work is purely medical—no work with guns. We simply are the medical helpers working with the infantry.

I received a card today from the Danbury Post Office concerning a letter there for me that was being held for one cent postage. Will you take care of it for me?

Everyone here has a miserable cold and I am no exception. I have done nothing but lie around all day & rest, trying to get over the worst of it. One of the fellows just came back from the P.X. with some Vix I asked him to get, and I am going to see if that will help me.

I am way behind in my letters, but I just haven’t felt like writing. You are the only ones I have written to in the last few days. I received a few cards from the children at school & a card & short note on it from Natalie (Frisbie) Johnston. She has resigned her position & is joining her husband in Maine.

It has turned fairly cold here, after the driving rain we had yesterday. Because there is no grass on the ground the water never seems to sink in very deeply, but rushes off in big streams. There was a stream about ten feet wide in front of our barracks. Then the mud remains, about 2 or 3 inches deep. Wonderful for walking!

There is a fairly good library at one of the service clubs here at the camp. I have taken out a library card & one book. We can keep the books for two weeks. Some books are the very latest, many that I have been wanting to read for a long time. There is a beautiful reading room there, as well as a cafeteria where you can buy meals if you care to.

We have a barber in our barracks who does a good job of cutting our hair for a quarter. If you think you can send it without breaking, I could use some Vaseline hair tonic & some shaving cream. Of course I can always buy such things here, but I know you like to keep busy, so you can send them if you wish.

I don’t know about the ten weeks of our basic training. How we can possibly accomplish as much as those in the seventeen weeks course I don’t see. I don’t think we will be expected to.

The map of the U.S. which you sent is just what I wanted. Thanks a million. How did you make out about the Indianapolis papers? Was there an account of the accident in them? Probably the story of it was never released by the press, for perhaps it was sabotage.
One of the fellows received a box of home made toll house cookies made with milk chocolate. They certainly were good and you can bet it wasn't long before they were gobbled up. It's perfectly O.K. about the fruit juices (when they come) and you can send more later if you wish.

The war news certainly looks encouraging, doesn't it? I hope it keeps up that way. I must close now, for I want to get some rest. Will write soon again.

Love,
Son.

1943

January, 1943

Letter 15, 1943-01-01 (back to Table of Contents)

Dear Mother & Dad,

This is the first letter I have written during the new year, and it's to wish you both a very happy New Year. The weather here today has been very warm, just like spring. You would never guess it is the middle of winter.

This is the first letter I have written in several days, for I have not been feeling too well—Nothing at all serious, just the cold that everyone around here has. I was in bed Tuesday with a temperature of a few degrees above normal, but that is gone now. Wednesday afternoon we had our first hike of about 5 miles, then that evening we went out on a night problem for about 6 miles, and the next afternoon a cross country hike of about 11 miles. Too darn much to begin with! The muscles at the back of my knees are so knotted that it really pains me to walk & that is another reason you haven't heard from me.

Hurray! The package arrived Wednesday, but I was kept so busy that I had to get a friend over in K Company get it for me. He left it for me, but I only had a chance to glance through it until last night. Everything was fine. In the dark I opened two cans of apricot juice and drank them quietly so no one would hear me. It just hit the spot. However, I don't know what happened to the can opener after I used it. I can't find it anywhere. Can you possibly send me another one? I have much of the food stored safely away for future use (Until all the cookies from Aunt Onie & your class are eaten. Will you tell them they arrived safely? I'll write later and thank them personally). Martha’s box of soap came as did the money from you & grandma. Thanks a million. Also your cake arrived in very good condition except for the
frosting. It certainly was excellent, excellent cake!!! It is all gone but one tiny little piece, and that before my birthday. We used it for a New Year’s Eve feast & finished the rest tonight with ice cream. I have only begun to look at the papers, but they certainly are fine for keeping me in touch with Danbury. (Do you really think it is worth it to have the paper sent every day?)

I can’t thank you for every little thing, but everything was just right. The package arrived in better condition than any others I have seen come. Today the package from the women of Danbury came & it was a very nice assortment of gifts, including saddle soap, shaving cream, dictionary, razor blades, playing cards, writing paper, cigarettes, polishing cloth, & some other small items I don’t recall just at the moment.

If anyone wonders why they haven’t heard from me you can tell them why. I will try to write some letters this week end, for I have a good many to catch up with. I’ve had some very nice cards & notes from a surprising number of people. It certainly was thoughtful of them to think of me.

I imagine you will find that letters will come through more quickly now that the holidays are past. They seem to be arriving more regularly already.

In regard to my pocket book from Mildred, keep it until I need it later.

It certainly was good to receive a letter, directly from you, dad. You needn’t worry about my being able to read it, for everything was clear. Don’t be so bashful about your letters, for they really are O.K. Let’s hear from you again.

I really must stop now, for I want to get to bed fairly early & rest up. I’ll try to write again soon. When you don’t hear from me you can be sure that it is only because I am so tired or busy that I can’t write & not because I haven’t been thinking about you.

Love,
Son
United States Army
Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

Camp Gruber, Okla.
A.P.O. #88
January 3, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Your New Years card arrived safely & was glad to hear from you & receive the enclosed gift. I'm making out pretty well with my money, for, as you know, I usually can manage it O.K.

Well, here I am, asking you to send me more things. I'm getting so much I don't know what I'll do when I have to move, but I can use them now anyway. Will you try to buy me several pair of part wool, part cotton white socks (they prob. will appear slightly grey) and send them as soon as you possibly can? I need them badly. You also might include a couple more pairs of white shorts & also undershirts. I have a small New Testament that the Chaplain gave me so you needn't send me one.

I saved the heavy wrapping paper your packages had in order to send back, to you whatever I need to send. I'm getting quite a stack of letters that eventually I'll want to send back to you to keep for me, as well as my shoes & the tin cake container. I would like a pair of plain toed shoes, but I don't know exactly what I want. Perhaps you can get me a pair before long.

The package from your class was very nice but rather shaken up when it arrived. The cookies, at least many of them, were wrapped individually in waxed paper, but I don't recall any of the fancy wrappings you asked about. Any time you want to send any packages of food especially dried fruits & home made cakes & cookies, you can be sure I'd appreciate it.

I had a letter from Bill Lewis today. He seems terribly discouraged at being where he is. He says he hasn't had a decent meal since he arrived. However, no one believes him for they think the stories in the newspapers & magazines about the excellent food the soldiers get are true. Someone must be getting the food, but I can't figure out who it can be.

I hope you get the things I asked for in this & previous letters off as soon as you can. I need most of them as soon as I can get them.

I'm still taking it rather east, trying to get over my cold. I'm feeling much better but not quite up to par yet. My legs are still slightly sore, but I can get around pretty well now.

I have received so many letters that I haven't answered that I am way behind in all my writing. I hope I can catch up with some of it today.

I'm using up some of the odd pieces of writing paper that I have accumulated so that my barracks bag won't be so full. We do not have lockers to keep our supplies in, and so everything except our clothes (outside) must be stowed away in the bags. I have two cigar boxes in which I am keeping my shoe polishing materials & extra toilet articles. I have seen advertised very small khaki bags just right size for keeping such things. If you find one or two of them I can use them, but don't go to any trouble to get them.

The weather is extremely variable here, hot one day & cold the next. I think that is why so many of us have colds. I'm glad now that I had my tonsils out last summer, for I have had very
little trouble with my throat.
    I'm afraid that's all for now. I'll write again soon. Let's hear from you.

Love,
Son

Letter 17, 1943-01-04 (back to Table of Contents)

United States Army
Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

Dear Mother & Dad,

The “Medical Soldiers Handbook” came today & I was glad to get it safely. It contains a
great deal of information that will prove to be of great value. It didn't come from the address
I sent you, so you probably found a different address.

If you haven't sent the extra hangers don't bother with them now. If you can find a fairly
small jackknife I could use it. In my desk you will find one of those little pencil sharpeners.
Will you send it please?

I'm writing, or at least beginning to write, this letter after lunch. I'll probably have to stop
in a minute or two & pick up my things. I've just pulled the sheet & pillow case off my bed to
give it to the laundry. My own personal laundry just came back, but it takes so long to get it
that I think I shall send only a little bit from now on and do the rest myself.

It's now the evening of Jan. 5. Been busy working and sporting. Went to the service club
tonight & bought my own supper (58¢) and darn good too.

The package came today & did it seem good to get that underwear. I might send some of
the towels back, but I'm not sure. Got a book from the library tonight also. Really haven't
done any studying but I'd better begin soon. I'm afraid this letter is rather disconnected, but
I'm trying to finish before the lights go out, so you will know I'm all right.

The old fellows went on a 25 mile hike & most of them are worn out and in bed already. I
would be too. I had planned to go to the movies tonight but the line was so long decided not
to wait.

Those apricots look good. You bet I'll like them. Well, so long. When I find time I'll write
again.

Love,
Son
United States Army
Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

Camp Gruber, Okla.
A.P.O. #88
January 7, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

The letters you wrote the third & fourth both arrived in the same mail today. It was great to hear from you and also the special note from dad. Don’t worry about your letters being newsy. They are just fine.

I think it was wise to change the paper subscriptions to just the Wednesday edition. Those who do get their daily home town papers get them so late that they rarely read them all.

I’m afraid my letters & directions get you all mixed up for I keep changing my mind about what to send & what not to send. I’m really getting quite a collection in my barracks bag. I’d hate to have to move suddenly.

The first 4 weeks of our basic training are up & we have 6 more to go. What we will do after that I have no idea. The older fellows who have just finished their ten weeks training are still hanging around, hiking, going to classes, etc. There are so many old fellows (in age I mean) and so many with limited service that I rather am wondering if it won’t be some time before we see active duty. Don’t bank on it though. It’s just surmise.

My cold is very much better & the soreness in my legs has practically disappeared. I’m not the only one who has been limping around either. I saw one of the lieutenants walking along very gingerly on his sore feet this evening. He evidently didn’t take that 28 mile hike the other fellows had very well either.

My birthday party sounded most interesting & so did the meal. Boy, do I wish I could have had some of it. I'm glad you got together as you did. I'm sorry to say that the top frosting on the cake was so badly mashed that the “Happy Birthday” was invisible. It wasn’t wasted though, I licked it off the wax paper. It was good too.

I received a game of checkers (one of those small miniature peg affairs) from the Class of ’41, but that is the only package I received from Teachers College. I understand other ones were sent out earlier. Probably I came into the army too late to receive one of them. I know Phebe had helped pack them before I left.

I think I have already answered your questions about the socks. They go about half way up my legs. The underwear is just fine & so were the towels. Don’t worry about the colored bands on them. They are just fine. (I can’t get the socks here very easily). I also found the map of Oklahoma & all the other articles you asked about. I use the flash light very little but it certainly comes in handy when I need it. I use it usually to find things in my barracks bag at night—when I wake up and need handkerchiefs or come in after the lights are out & need to underdress, wash, etc.

I haven’t been receiving many letters from anyone but you lately. Could it be because I have seventeen unanswered letters sitting here staring me in the face? I guess I’ll get busy.
I was hoping to have one of the fellows take my picture & have it sent to you, but an order has recently been issued forbidding the use or possession of cameras within the camp without special permission of the Commanding Officer. I don't think I'll drop in to see General Sloan right away.

The fellow who sleeps above has just received his radio from home & so now we have that to keep us amused. We have a few double bunks in our barracks & I'm in one of them. They are slightly inconvenient but they also have their advantages. I know a good many fellows would be glad to change with me. Well, to get back to the fellow who sleeps above—he also was transferred from K Company. He comes from Rhode Island & has been here since October. He is very nervous & stutters. He was moved here in hopes that the doctors could help him. They are making him do everything with his left hand in hopes that it will relieve some of the nervous tension. Oftentimes, if a young child who is normally left is made to write with his right in school, a person like this fellow results. He has a tendency to get on my nerves but he doesn't mean to bother so I don't mind.

I feel rather sorry for Martha. That sounds like Barbara, though, doesn't it?

So Jean is associating with the plutocrats again. Tell her I could use a good felt hat when I get out of here.

My, Goburn's death was a real surprise, wasn't it? Are they going to continue the school?

I had a nice note from Helen the other day. She apparently is finding difficulty in locating a place to live. If you to the wedding, and you most certainly will, give Paul & Helen my very best wishes. By the way, when is the wedding to be?

I don't seem to be able to get much reading done, the evenings go by so rapidly. I'm still getting books from the library though, & keeping them with the good intention of getting them read.

I'm going to write a few short notes tonight so I must close now. You'll hear from me soon again.

Love,
Son

Letter 19, 1943-01-09 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 2

United States Army
Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

Camp Gruber, Okla.
A.P.O. #88
January 9, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Your letter of January 6th came today with the pictures of the Christmas tree. Those unopened packages of mine certainly have me puzzling. You shouldn't do things like that. The tree appears to be very full & tall, almost as good as usual. And incidentally, the photo's are
most clear. You did a nice job in taking them.

I received an invitation to Helen’s wedding in today’s mail also. It was nice of them to remember me and I wish I could accept. Why is it the ceremony is to be held at the church rather than at home as they previously were planning? In regard to the invitation to the reception, if the invitation was worded similar to the wedding invitation, you will reply in some way (Mr. & Mrs. Truman Warner accept with pleasure, etc.). You can find some good examples in the book of etiquette (blue cover?) in the book case in the bedroom. I believe it is on the top shelf.

The cookies from your class had none of the decorations you spoke about. Apparently something had happened to them before they were sent.

As yet I have received no newspapers of any kind from the news office. Perhaps it isn’t time for me to get them yet.

I have already sent a note to Mrs. Murphy thanking here committee for the birthday box. She probably has received it by now.

No, I haven’t heard from Mrs. Higgins yet. She probably has just been putting off writing the same way all of us do. I still have so many letters to answer that I don’t know where I’m at. I don’t intend to spend all my time writing letters, however. You’d be surprised how long it takes to write. If I answered all the letters on time I would do nothing evenings but wield my pen. You need to relax now and then.

I've been saving the box of nuts & only opened them this morning before your letter arrived, and did they just hit the spot. Do you think cheese or crackers or something like that could be sent safely through the mails? Little tid bits like that surely would taste good. The more I think of it, though, I'm afraid crackers prob. can be bought here at the camp & be in better condition than if you send them. Perhaps we had better forget about it.

None of the last packages have arrived as yet but I expect them any time. I don’t know about the khaki bags as yet, but probably I could use another of them. Better wait and see. Its hard to keep things separated in the bag without something like that. I have some cigar boxes I'm keeping a few things in but they are bulky & hard to manage. The large bags I told you about are fairly large & I use them for laundry and one for keeping my cans of fruit juice & other stores of provisions. A very convenient pantry. Perhaps you remember the handkerchief case of leather I used for travelling. It probably is in one of my suitcases either under my bed or in the closet in my bedroom. I could use it but don’t send it right away. Wait ’til you have another package & slip it in.

How are you managing with the food & gas situation? Are you getting enough meat and butter or are you finding difficulties in those respects? Our food seems to be much better lately & the meals much more palatable. I hope it keeps up.

Most of the fellows you wrote about, saying they were here at the camp came out on the train with me. Many of them live in barracks near me but I very seldom see them. It may sound strange but about the only time you ever see anyone in another company or detachment is at the P. X. or once in a while at the movies or at church.

I’m planning to see the Broadway hit “Claudia” tomorrow night if I can make it. I guess
that’s all for now. Write again soon.

Love,
Son

Letter 20, 1943-01-12 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 2

Camp Gruber, Okla.
A.P.O. #88
January 12, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

The postman at the post office will begin to know me personally, for I have been running
down there everyday. Both packages have come through safely with the food in wonderful
condition as well as the less precious contents. The cookies are all gone and the brownies
nearly so. I haven’t cut into the date and nut bread yet. I have a whole box of food stored
away now & I imagine it will last me quite a while. The socks are just the thing. The small bag
you sent is great. Can you get me another one similar to it? The lining was so nice that I didn’t
want to use it for my polishing materials. I had rather have a cheaper one for them. I really
could use another bag like the one you sent also. They are just what I have been looking for.
Did those fruit juices hit the spot? I’ll say they did! I’m saving them very carefully & no one
else is even going to get a smell of them. I’m going to keep all my handkerchiefs, including the
ones you just sent because I am using so many of them with the cold I have. I may send some
of them home later. The batteries for the flashlight will probably soon come in handy, but as
yet the light seems to still be working very well.

A group of us went to see “Claudia” last night at the theater. It was very good, but I imagine
the Broadway production was much better. We stood in line about an hour before the show
opened and there were hundreds ahead of us in the line and also hundred behind us.

Just before I left for the play one of the non-commissioned officers came up to my bed
madly waving a slip of paper. It was the record of my innoculations [sic]. When I was trans-
ferred evidently my record was not moved also, for I have been missing out on my shots for
several weeks. They discovered it last night & so I am beginning to get my shots again. My
arm is rather sore today but not at all bad. The innoculations really haven’t bothered me much
so far.

I received a very nice package from Mildred today from A & S’s. It contained a very nice
selection of nuts, candies, crackers & cheese. I’ve eaten very little of it yet. Will you tell
Mildred I have received it & enjoy it very much. I’ll write soon also, but I just can’t find the
time to write all the letters I want to. I just wrote to her the other day while the package must
have been on the way.

Harley Warner wrote me a short note telling about the Warner Reunion, etc. I also had a
letter from Phyllis Terry telling about some of the happenings at school and promising me one
of her cakes. She is a really good cook, you know.
We've done very little hiking during the past few days so they will probably begin with a bang soon again. Our classes still keep us busy, but I'm not doing enough studying. I just don't have the ambition & energy at night to sit down & concentrate on my notes & books.

The anatomy book from Barnes & Noble is excellent. The illustrative plates are the best I have ever seen in a book of this size.

As yet I have received none of the papers. They probably have been slowed up on the way. Sometime when you have a few minutes and are down town, will you stop in Heims Music Store & find out if they have any recorders and how much they are. Recorders are instruments something like my symphonet, but made of wood & much more elaborate. I think that because the supply from Europe has been cut off the prices will be very high, but they might accidentally have one left at the early prices. One of the fellows here in the barracks has done quite a bit of playing with them, & I thought I might learn to play one here. Don't buy it. Just find if they are available & how much they cost.

Now for another request. I would like a good, strong polishing cloth like the shoe shine boys use.

I hope you have been taking care of yourselves. You never tell me much about how you are feeling. You never say much about grandma either.

Gracie Allen & her duck Herman are squawking away on the radio now & I'm half listening to them.

General Krueger was visiting the camp today but I only saw the car go by. That was sufficient for me. I don't go for all this saluting and stuff.

Well, I must close now; for I am going to study, drink some fruit juices and take a shower (and make my bed in the next hour).

Write soon.

Love,
Son
anything, tell him I didn't believe the rates would bite through the tin cans.
You spoke about not being sure I enjoyed everything you sent because I hadn't mentioned
all of them. Everything has been great, but, you see, when I open a package, I usually put the
things away as soon as possible. In that way I often forget just what I received and when, and
therefore don't mention all of them. Don't worry about it. I really appreciate everything that
you have sent.
The “Danbury News-Times” has not arrived as yet. It's strange that I have not received
even one yet.
Ice cream is being rationed here, and we are finding it difficult to get our usual pints. There
were none at all available tonight.
My cold is very much better—very little coughing & phlegm now. Good for me—and the
fruit juices. (I still have a few cans of juice available)
Well, here's another request. I could very profitably use a pair of moccasins (sp.), black
or brown, similar to the ones I left at home, to use as a pair of slippers as well as easy shoes.
(Two in one & thus save space)
Miss Harrison wrote a short note, telling about the play at school. She says that many of
the teachers at D.T.C. are ill. I guess they are not holding up very well.
Send me a couple of dad's blotters, if you will please.
Well, I guess that's all tonight. I'm going to wash my mess gear & cup etc. before I go to
sleep as well as do some studying.

P.S. My legs are rather tired, but not knotted up as they were before. I'm beginning to get
used to it.

TW's earlier comments about saluting and his comments about the rats eating through tin cans
suggest that he is developing skepticism about the army's wisdom.

Letter 22, 1943-01-17 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 2

Dear Mother & Dad,
The cold wave that you have been shivering through finally caught up with us last night.
Our barracks was about as cold as our attic bedrooms at home in the middle of winter, since
the heating system also went on the fritz at the same time. I wrapped up in my comforter last
night & played chess. This morning, when I finally managed to thaw out, I went to breakfast
and then to church. The heating system has at last been fixed, and so it is comparatively
comfortable now.
I think it would be possible to reach me by telephone here if you ever needed to in any
extreme emergency. Probably a person to person call would be necessary. Call the 350th
Dispensary, 88th Division at Camp Gruber. Don’t use the phone unless it is very important, for I would have to be traced to wherever I should happen to be in the camp & it would cause quite a commotion.

The last packages you sent have not come as yet, but the list of the contents came in yesterday’s letter. They probably will be here in a day or two.

I’m washing my own socks & handkerchiefs for the laundry treats them quite roughly. I’m sending the rest of my clothes, however.

If anyone asks about not hearing from me I hope you will explain why. I just can’t seem to write all the letters I should.

The Wednesday “News-Times” of January 13 came this week. The selection of news items is very good & I surely do appreciate getting the news. They evidently only started the subscription with that issue.

The fruit juices are excellent, but I’m afraid the cost of sending them is too high. Do you think it is worth the postage it costs?

If I remember correctly I didn’t ask you to send me any more of those socks. Three or four more pairs would help.

Since the last paragraph I’ve been up to the theater, but no seats were available so I’m back again. (I also stopped at the P.X. & bought myself a 15¢ Devil’s food cake.)

We had an excellent dinner today, roast beef, mashed potatoes, string beans, peas & carrots, jello fruit salad, bread & butter, jelly & coffee. Not like home cooking, though.

I’m feeling fine now, and am having as good a time as possible.

Incidentally, the spots you see on the paper are bits of chocolate candy & cake I’m trying to eat while writing.

(This really is a messy looking letter, isn’t it? Well, I’ll try harder the next time.

I believe I have a soft, small loose leaf note book at home. None are available here so if you find mine will you send it to me? (Also a package of paper). To be more specific, the note book is not the size of my zipper notebook but a smaller size (not pocket size) Not very definite but clear enough I hope. (There might be some in the stores.)

I seem to do nothing but ask you to send me things from home I really am getting an awful collection, but I seem to find a use for it all. If we ever move suddenly I certainly shall be in a fine fix. I’m not the only one who has such a collection, however.

As I look down the barracks, it looks like washday, for on improvised clothes lines are hanging all sorts of socks, underwear towels, etc. My field jacket is drying (I hope) under the heat ventilator.

I heard from Martha & Mary Anita this week but not from Jim Birtles. I imagine he is on furlough & so quite busy.

I’ve never heard from Jim Gallagher and I can’t understand why. Something is very funny there. I think that Jim B. hasn’t heard from him either.

We are on the sixth week of the basic training and after that I have no idea what will happen. (Only 5 weeks to go.)

I’m glad that I didn’t plan to bring a radio with me for they are extremely difficult to carry or send. All the radio’s that have been seen here have been broken in some way or other.

When I have the opportunity to see the particular sergeant I need to see, I’ll find out about dependency payments. Until then we’ll just have to wait.

Did you get over to see the D.T.C. play that Miss Harrison directed? I hope you have been
able to get to the movies to see some good shows. Take advantage of them. They'll get your mind of [sic] your troubles. (Or don't you have any now?)

How is grandma feeling? Give her my best wishes & tell her I was asking about her.

I understand the choir is having its difficulties these days. Not much chance to rehearse or many to rehearse.

I haven't heard about how the air raid warden system is working. Have they kept dad busy running out in the cold nights?

The fellow who had been teaching at the U. of California is playing his recorder, which reminds me, if you can get a good wooden recorder for about $5.00 get it and send it to me. Divy might help you if you don't know exactly about it. Try to get an Alto (key of F). Don't be discouraged if you find it impossible for they really are very scarce right now, for most of them were imported from Germany before the war.

I'll write again soon.

Love,
Son

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Letter 23, 1943-01-19 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 2

Dear Mother & Dad,

The cold weather has come, and with a vengeance. Last evening & night the temperature dropped to well below the zero mark as we shivered through the heatless climate. The heating system failed again – they claim the gas mains froze, but I have my doubts. The schools, public buildings, factories, etc. in the nearby cities have closed, apparently because all the local inhabitants began to use the natural gas in such unusual amounts that the supply was nearly drained. I slept under two blankets and a comforter, but though I was fairly comfortable, the fellows from California just don't appreciate this kind of weather. (Incidentally, we have just been issued an extra comforter.)

The package with two boxes of cookies, the knife, two candy bars & two cans of fruit juices came today. It was really here yesterday but the post office closed because of lack of heat. The registered letter is also at the post office now, but I can't get to the post office to get it.

Are those cookies good!! The box was just cold enough so they felt like cookies that had been hardened in the refrigerator. Candy is getting rather scarce, but not too much so. Nevertheless, the candy is greatly appreciated. I drank the last can of fruit juice last night (in the cold) so you can be sure I enjoy the juices.

In regard (this is now being written Wednesday noon. I went to the movies last night and stopped at the above point) to the recorder. I hope it is made of wood, for they are the ones that produce the best tone quality. Don't worry about the price being too much. A soprano
recorder would be all right but I would prefer the alto.  

The P.X. is also closed because of the cold and so we are running short of supplies. The box of food fits in mighty handy, let me tell you.  

The cold is slightly better today but we are still shivering.  

Yesterday we were expected to go through the gas chamber for a gas mask drill, but the temperature messed that plan also.  

Some of the letters from the children at school have come. They tell me that Henry Smith’s brother died Christmas Eve. Did you know that?  

There doesn’t seem much to write about the activities at camp. Just the same old routine.  

I’m finishing this at the service club at 7:30 in the evening. Came here to study because it is the quietest spot I know of in the camp for doing that sort of thing.  

Enough for now. Will write again soon when time permits.

Love,  
Son

TW's skepticism about the army's truthfulness is revealed in his belief that the troops are not being told the truth about the gas shortage.

Letter 24, 1943-01-23 (back to Table of Contents)  
MS026, box: 35 folder: 2

88th Division

CO Med. Det.  
Reg. 350th Inf.  
A.P.O. 88

Camp Gruber  
Oklahoma

January 23, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'll begin by telling you about my packages. I've received the one containing the apples, etc. as well as the one with the individual bags for shoe polishing material & the like. They were in fine condition. (I can't list the individual items for I'm at the Service Club, but everything was in the particular packages). The registered letter & money also arrived & an excellent box of food from Aunt Amanda et al. The apples were very good, as of course was the other food. Now don't begin to make excuses about your cooking. You know darn well it's always excellent. I think you're looking for compliments. Are you? Confess.

No, I haven't been paid yet. I wasn't in long enough to sign the payroll for the first month but I've already signed it for the next period & will be paid at the end of the month. I'll have no earthly use for all that money while I still have my present supply on hand so I am expecting to send most of it home to you by money order. Use whatever amount you need. I still have not touched the money I put away in my money belt.

As yet I haven't been to town (Muskogee) for I've had no desire to go. I think I might go next week just to look around. There is very little to attract one there, for the place is crowded with soldiers, and officers whom you are obliged to salute whenever you meet them.

Has Divy seen about the recorder yet? If she thinks it would be wiser to buy a more
expensive one in New York by all means do so. I don’t want anything very fancy however.

I thought I had told you that I am enjoying my classes. I write so many different things to various people that I don’t always keep the continuity straight. Ask Martha to let you see the letters I wrote to her. It seems that when I write to you I’m always asking for something rather than telling you what goes on here.

We went through the gas chamber Wednesday. I suffered no harmful effects (my mask fortunately was functioning properly) except a slight stinging & burning of the skin on the back of my neck. Outside the chamber, however, because so much of the tear gas still clung to our clothes, my eyes were affected. Nevertheless the attack of crying was very brief, lasting only an hour or so.

The officers have laid out a testing course that we are expected to pass. It consists of various sections including push ups, a 300 yard dash in 60 sec. (I’m still puffing after the first try), and a zig-zag course of crawling, creeping, running, hopping etc. Its rather wearing but I guess I can take it.

After the cold spell I told you about, it has now turned very warm. I was out walking today very comfortably in just my wool shirt – no blouse or jacket. The weather simply isn’t predictable out here.

How do you like the new stationery? The clover leaf affair at the top of the sheet is the type of insignia (representing the 88th division) we wear on our left arms near the shoulder.

I’m still wearing my own socks & handkerchiefs, simply because I like to use my own rather than someone else’s that might be returned to me. The other clothes are more carefully labelled for returning for you need your particular size. I don’t [sic] my running my personal laundry for it only takes a few minutes. I use the cord from the packages for a line as it rolls up very compactly. No pins of any sort are necessary. We can hang them outside, but when the dust blows the wet clothes are such good perches for the flying dust in a few minutes one would scarcely know they had been washed.

I really am going to study now so I will close. Will write again when time allows.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

I haven't written for several days simply because I have been too busy, both day and night. We have been preparing for the annual inspection by the Inspector General—scrubbing the barracks from floor to ceiling, laying out our equipment in a definitely specified manner inch by inch, article by article, cleaning the dispensary, etc. Just before inspection today I discovered I could not display the under wear from home & so I had to wash the only G.I. undershirt I could find an dry it in a hurry. I'm afraid we didn't pass the inspection for someone's side burns were just a little too long, another forgot to put his initial & serial number on his canteen cover, etc. If they would worry about more important things maybe we would accomplish things more quickly.

The moccasins have come and also two packages, the one with the notebook & magazine in it and the one with potatoe [sic] chips, etc.—very, very good. Everything tastes very good, though I have only sampled a portion.

I saw about dependency provisions today and will be sending you soon some papers to have signed. I'll learn more about it later.

The notebook is just what I wanted. I'm getting an awful collection in my barracks bag so I'll probably be sending my shoes & letters etc. home shortly when I find time. Those small bags have helped wonderfully in helping to keep my possessions straightened out.

I have seen some fruit juices at the P.X. but have not taken any particular notice of them. If they are anything I can use, I'll get them here and save postage.

I'm really feeling very well now so you needn't worry. The weather changes rapidly but I guess I can take it.

Don't forget about the recorder.

I've been writing (and talking) all evening & this is all I have written, but I must close now. Will try to write again tomorrow.

Love,
Son

TW is learning about chicken shit in the army. Cf., Paul Fussell's Wartime.

Letter 26, 1943-01-31 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 2

88th Division

CO Med. Det.
Reg. 350th Inf.
A.P.O. 88

Camp Gruber
Oklahoma

January 31, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

It's about ten minutes past five Sunday afternoon and I'm just getting around to writing. This certainly has been a busy week and it left me little time to write.

Yesterday I went to town for the first time since I have been in Oklahoma. Muskogee is a good sized town and packed to the brim with soldiers & officers. I tried to buy some special
equipment I wanted, but it is difficult to find what I wanted. I did buy a pair of $11.00 Floorsheim shoes (regulation officer model). The price is rather steep, but they are excellent shoes. I'm sending my old pair home & am including a number of other small articles as well as the letters I have received so far. I'm getting so much that I'm finding it troublesome to store it compactly. I also bought myself an excellent steak dinner and we bought back to camp with us a big box of cheese, crackers and a bag each of apples & oranges.

Last night we went to a dance at the U.S.O., but there were so many fellows and so few girls present that much dancing was next to impossible. However, we enjoyed ourselves reading etc. at the club. It really is a beautiful building & well equipped – easy chairs, books and magazines, ping pong tables, radios, victrolas, wash rooms, etc. I hope I'll be able to go in more often now that I've become acquainted with the town. Perhaps some week end we'll even be able to go to Tulsa.

Friday the Medical Detachment underwent what is known as the Medical Conditioning Course. Wearing a light pack you crawl on your stomach (or on your back if it is under barbed wire) over a definitely planned course of trenches, shell holes & barbed wire entanglements while machine guns fire over your head and charges of dynamite are exploding in the shell holes. It sounds pretty terrible, but it really isn't that bad, for the machine guns are set to fire at a definite height at which you can't be hit unless you stand up. You needn't worry about it for it is perfectly safe. I only am telling you about it because I thought you might like to hear what we are doing.

I no longer have to go to the Post Office for my packages. They are carried by the mail men to the barracks and we sign a specially prepared list when we receive them. It's really most convenient.

I would enjoy the peaches very much, but I fear that with the rough handling the packages undergo it really would be courting disaster to send them. Better wait a while.

I've developed quite a system of keeping my possessions separated within my barracks bag by using several small bags to hold the various articles – one for books, one for socks & handchefs, one for toilet articles, etc. Much more convenient than sorting through everything each time I need something.

Jim Birtles is in Fresno, California. I had a card from him, & he said he was sending a letter shortly. Nothing yet from Jim Gallagher, but I did have a nice letter from Donnie.

In the box I am sending you will find what is left of a cotton ball I picked one day when we were hiking. It was already dried & withered, but I wanted to keep of souvenir of the first cotton plant I saw in their native state.

One of the fellows from California receives some excellent Greek pastry & home grown California fruits through the mail ever so often. Recently he received a pail (a pail, mind you) of figs & a kind of pastry known as bakalavar (spelling, mine). I think it is the best pastry I have ever eaten. It is made of tissue thin slices of dough, filled between each slice with crushed nuts, then baked & when taken from the over soaked in honey. The cakes are so moist & juicy that the pill was necessary to keep the liquid from running out. We gourged ourselves on it (at night, so the rest of the barracks wouldn't see us). It really is wonderful. – so rich & luxurious. Oh, my. I wish I could have saved you a piece. Typical (or is it typical?) Mediterranean cooking – probably of Turkish rather than Greek origin.

What is Tony doing now?

The weekly edition of the paper is arriving o.k. now. It certainly helps to keep in touch
with things at home.

I have made plans to put five dollars toward war bonds each month. Now that I'm pretty well settled I find I'm not spending so much as at first. I can get along very well on my pay even after they deduct your allotment. I hope everything is going all right with you in regard to money. If you need it, don't be afraid to draw on my bank account.

I thing it would be wise to pay my income tax this year rather than to wait until after the war, when it probably will be even more difficult. If dad's income tax return is too high might that not interfere with you obtaining your dependency allotment? They might not realize how much of dad's income has gone toward doctor's bills. Well, we'll just wait & see. Send me whatever information is necessary for making out my return – also any information about deductions, etc. you might have.

I have plenty air-mail stamps & stamped envelopes for a while. I'll tell you when I begin to run short again.

I just haven't found time to write any letters this week to anyone but you. I hope they'll understand. I can't spend all my free time writing.

The war news is quite encouraging isn't it? Let's hope it keeps up. Everyone here is just as anxious to get home as I am, you can be sure.

If the movie “Casablanca” comes to town I think you might enjoy seeing it. The acting is very good & the story quite exciting.

Well, enough for tonight. I'm planning to do some studying, but whether I'll ever get to it or not I don't know. It really is difficult to study with so much noise all about you but I'll try anyhow.

Write soon.

Love,
Son

February, 1943
Letter 27, 1943-02-03 (back to Table of Contents)

Camp Gruber, Okla.
A.P.O. #88
February 3, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

This will be only a short note this evening, for we are going on a long hike tomorrow and I have a good many things to do.

The package of food arrived in good condition (brownies, cookies, etc.) and are excellent. What are those cookies? They are excellent & keep very well.

We went over the obstacle course a day or two ago & I went through without any difficulty. I wrote to Martha telling her about it. I haven't time now to write much so ask her to read you that part of the letter if she will.

I'm glad to hear the recorder is on its way. I'll be looking for it.
In regard to my income tax. I'll have to write later. One of the sergeants in civilian life had done a good deal of work in regards to these taxes and he is helping us out. Do you think you can find out from Mr. Thomsen how much pay I received in 1942? Just tell him you are trying to make my return & need that information. There are various reductions that I can use. Will you have dad find the mileage we put on the car last year? He probably can get this information from the records of the Willard Battery Co.

Some of the fellows have just come back from acting as company aid men. They had about an hours notice to get ready, took their field packs out into the field & may be called any time during the night. They are to sleep in their clothes and be ready at a minutes notice.

Wouldn't you know I'd be out here when you have all that snow back home. Tell dad if he wants to use my skis he's welcome to them.

I'm really having a lot of fun despite all the work. We have a great time, almost like living in a fraternity at college. The greatest difficulty is trying to find time to do all I want to do.

They tell us we may be going on manoeuvers before long, but of course no one really knows. Maybe I'll never have the chance to go away to study, but I'm still hoping. Some of the older fellows are leaving to study this month.

This is very short, I'm afraid, but I just can't write any longer. I'll write again soon. Tomorrow, if I'm not too tired, I want to go to Muskogee and hear a concert.

Love,
Son

Letter 28, 1943-02-05 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 3

Dear Mother & Dad,

We've been out in the field all morning, just lying about blissfully in the sun, enjoying our selves. They evidently are giving us a rest after yesterday's long hike. (Frankly, the lieutenant with us is just too darn lazy to do any more than is absolutely necessary & so is having some leisure time along with us.)

Dinner is just past and we are sitting about, a smouldering camp fire absorbing the heat. I had to wash some of the big pots in the river and tried to do such a good job I nearly missed getting them back to the jeep trailer in time to be taken back to the mess hall.

Incidentally, I rode in a jeep yesterday for the first time. We were late in getting in from the 28 mile hike and so they transported small groups of us back to camp. Those little cars certainly can travel & manage to get themselves about under all sorts of conditions – mud, brush, trees, water, sand and what have you.

Despite the fact that I was quite tired I went to town last night and heard the Trapp Family Choir. Perhaps you remember how much I enjoyed the concert they gave in Danbury last year. There were at their usual excellence. We went back-stage after the concert to meet the family. They were most charming indeed. The fellow I went with had his recorder with him and they seemed to enjoy talking with us about the “flute.” They used recorders to accompany some of
their singing and so we were most interested to hear them play. They seem most anxious to have the recorders introduced into the United States and inquired about any of the soldiers at the camp playing them.

Tell Martha that they are planning to give a concert in Hartford soon and I know she would enjoy hearing them.

They have purchased a home in Vermont because the Green Mountains remind them so much of the mountains in their native Austria.

I probably be stopping soon for I hear action in the immediate offing. An aid station has been set up and we are to simulate working on casualties being carried in from the front. Later I was sent out into the woods as a company aid man to care for any patients I could find. I think I made out fairly well but the lieutenant in charge (the one in the detachment I simply cannot even learn to like) of course found fault with some of my bandages. However, I think so little of him personally that his criticism doesn't even bother me. I know I did the best possible under the circumstances.

(continued on Saturday afternoon)

I'm leaving in a few minutes for the post office to mail the package that has been sitting under my bed for the last week. I'm also planning to enclose a money order for fifty dollars. I had plenty before I was paid and I don't want to carry too much on me.

When you send another package you might use the box I'm sending my shoes home in, for it folds up easily when not in use. Don't feel that the other boxes are not satisfactory. It's just that I'd like to have this one handy in case I should find it necessary to mail things in a hurry.

The cake arrived yesterday afternoon and was gone by night. I needn't tell you how good it was. I have quite a bit on hand for a while. You really needn't send me all those supplies you know.

The recorder hasn't arrived yet, but I'm rather hoping it will be here this afternoon.

It is quite a long walk to the main post office where I must go to send a money order or insure packages so I must close in order to get there before it closes. It is near the main gate, quite a step from here.

Will write soon again.

Love,
Son

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TW is developing an ability to be critical; previously his letters avoided negative comment on the army and on individuals. It's also a bit funny that he asks for provisions but then tells his parents that he doesn't need them.

Letter 29, 1942-02-08 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 3

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February 8, 1942 (Monday)

Dear Mother & Dad,

By the type of paper I'm using you probably can tell that I'm writing this out in the field. We came out to the bivouac area and put up our tents and had an inspection of our equipment.
One group of us, who are well camouflaged near the edge of the area sat about singing until noon. We have just finished lunch (pork chops, mashed potatoes, peas and carrots, greens, bread and butter, coffee and apple pie). It's really wonderful lying out here on my blanket, under the sky, while the wind is rustling the dry leaves that still cling to so many of the trees in this section.

Perhaps I shall go to see “Hellsapoppin,” a stage production of which is showing at the camp tonight. Those who have already seen the show say it is very good.

I ate at the Service Club Saturday

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm enclosing a letter I started Monday while we were out in the field. This is the first chance I have had since to write. I have been selected as a company aid man (fortunately not a litter bearer), and therefore Tuesday and Wednesday I went out on a tactical march as a first aid man with one of the rifle companies. It was great fun but quite tiring. Up and down gullies and gulches, through gas [??] areas and all that sort of thing.

The recorder came yesterday. My heavens! How much did you pay for that thing? When I ever saw the make and then looked at the price list I was amazed. It is worth the money, but I fully expected to receive a cheaper. It is exactly like the one the fellow from California has, so I really am very pleased. However, I really didn't realize they were so expensive when I asked you to buy me one.

The package of cookies, Valentine candy, juices, potato chips, etc. came today & are most appreciated. Everyone keeps asking if you really make those cookies yourself.

I'm glad the application for your payments went through O.K. I know it will help straighten out affairs at home.

There are all sorts of rumors as to what we are being trained for. If we ever do go across, and at present I don't see how we are ready for any active duty. I hear that we may go to north Africa. During the last war this division was supposedly an army of occupation – one that went in to hold the territory after it had been captured. – and probably it will be doing the same during this war. Of course no one around here really knows. However, since we haven't been on manoeuvers yet, and aren't scheduled to go for several weeks we won't be leaving immediately. At least that is my interpretation of affairs as I see them now. (Just rumor. Keep this to yourself.)

You asked about the names of some of the fellows I've met here. Just a partial list:

1. Seth Ulman – Calif. – University of Calif. – has the recorder – English student – dramatic teacher
2. Ted (Elephtherios) Efstratis – Calif. – Greek – student of pharmacy at U. of Calif. – gets those wonderful pastries I wrote about.
3. John Weick – farmer from Texas – young fellow – had large farm of his own – tall – blond
4. Albert Fosner – Grand Rapids, Mich. – sleeps next to me – member of Disciples church
5. Bob Miller – worked in hotel in Detroit – chubby but losing weight –
6. George Peckham – the psychiatric problem that sleeps above me – from Rhode Island – is leaving Monday – being transferred – so you probably will hear no more about him.
Joe Filips – from Texas – wife is high school teacher of languages.

These are the ones the sleep right near me and the ones I know best. Of course there are many others.

Many in our barracks who are classified as being of limited service are being transferred next week. – probably about 25 or so. Perhaps that will mean that a new group of recruits is to come in soon.

I’m so glad to hear that grandma is getting along so well now. Tell her I received her letter and was glad to hear from her.


If you think of any expenses that are deductible on my income tax let me know. How much is auto license – drivers license – personal tax – use tax on car – gas tax – car inspection tax (how many during past year) – my doctors bills – insurance on car while paying for it – interest on bank account – dentist bill (don’t worry about this one).

Will you look through my music and see if you can find a green (?) music book that has rounds and catches at the bottom of various pages. If so will you send it?

Tell Mildred that I have received my medical insignia and so she needn’t worry about getting it for me. If she already has done so have her send it to you & keep it until I need it.

The lights in the day room are about to be shut off so I must close now.

I’ll write again when I have time.

Love,

Son

P.S. I heard from Jim Bartles.

TW talks about the rumors that abound. It’s interesting that he was aware of the history of the 88th in World War I. He hopes that it will have a similar role in WWII. Someone was undoubtedly trying to suggest a heritage for the unit, but the heritage is interpreted in terms of personal security.

Letter 30, From Danbury State Teacher's College  
MS026, box: 35 folder: 3
Letter on Danbury State Teachers College stationery, accepting his resignation as corresponding secretary of the Alumni Association. He resigned Nov. 30, 1942.

Letter 31, 1942-02-13  
MS026, box: 35 folder: 3
February 13, 1942

Dear Mother & Dad,

You probably won’t be hearing from me for a week or more, because our regiment is going out in the field next week, and I imagine I won’t find much time to write. We are only hiking out about fifteen miles from the barracks, but inasmuch as we won’t be in nights I guess you’ll simply imagine you’re hearing from me.

I certainly am glad I have my small flash light. I can pack it with my toilet articles at the top of my pack and thus have it handy to use at night. It’s just small enough to slip in without
any trouble and still add very little weight.

We had an inspection today of all the equipment and clothing we have been issued. Those inspections taken a great deal of time, but I suppose they are necessary.

Next week I am one of the three company aid men that go with Co. L out into the field. We take care of minor cuts etc. The Battalion Aid Station for four companies will also be set up nearby and will act as a dispensary etc. I believe that none of the new fellows who came in with me are located there except to act as litter bearers, and naturally I'd rather be an aid man than a litter bearer. Those who go away to school and become non-commissioned officers usually are the ones who work right in the aid station as technical assistants to the surgeons.

Will you send me a small bottle of indelible ink and a small pen for marking some of my clothes. India ink that is indelible will be fine. Did you say you had some scouring pads I could have? We can't buy them here for love or money, but we still are expected to keep our equipment clean. One package will be plenty for now. Don't worry if they are not available.

I heard from Jim Birtles today. I guess he really doesn't like the army system of doing things any more than I do.

Despite the misgivings I had about army life, it isn't as bad as I thought it would be, probably because I've found friends who have the same interests I do. In many ways this makes up for the experiences I missed in not going away to college, for our end of the barracks if [is] about like a group living in a college dormitory. Several here are college graduates or have been to college for several years. I'm even beginning to read Shakespeare's plays with greater appreciation under the tutelage of fellow from the University of California.

Martha wrote and said Doris Jackson had left Brookfield. You probably knew about it. They must be having their troubles getting teachers to fill all the vacancies that are occurring.

Someone was married here in the camp this afternoon. I saw the bride and groom dashing by in a jeep, with a just married sign attached to the rear, and a guard of cars with honking horns following after.

A good many have gone to town today, but I didn't have any desire to go. There really isn't much to do unless you have special plans. I can have just as much fun here at camp. I think I'll go to the service club tonight for supper.

I just bought a leather belt for my dress blouse for a dollar from a fellow who is leaving the medics and thinks he will soon be leaving the army. That is one of the things I wanted in Muskogee and couldn't get. I saw some envious eyes on me when it fit and I decided to take it. He certainly sold it at a loss and I'm really lucky to get it, for leather goods are getting practically impossible to buy.

Will write again as soon as I can.

Love,

Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

Come in from the field problem & am going out again soon.

Am sending you three folders of pictures. I thought you could distribute them for me. One for you, grandma, Mildred, ?? do you think anyone else would want one? Who would you suggest?

Will try to write again soon when I have time.

Love,
Son

February 16, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Here it is now the second day of our problem out in the field and I'm still kicking. We hiked out about 17 miles from the camp yesterday. On the way, one fellow from Company L (the company for which I am one of the aid men) had cramps in his legs & dropped out. Consequently I dropped out with him. It was a good thing I did, for he nearly passed out two or three times while we were making the rest of the distance in to the bivouac area. All the rest of the regiment had gone out of sight & so we just guessed our way in from there. We were lost in the woods for about an hour and a half, but I finally picked up the trail of candy wrappers that had been dropped along the way and managed to get back safely. We were perfectly O.K. all the while, but it was quite an experience.

Only 3 medics go with each company & I was the odd man. I was afraid I would not have any shelter at night, for each of us carries but half a tent. However, I learned that one of the medics in the next company was also in the same fix & so I pitched my shelter with him and the two medics he was with. As a result, by fastening the two tents together we had about the warmest shelter in the camp. The lieutenants who saw what we had done liked the idea so much that they followed suit. I saw theirs in the morning.

It really was cold last night, sleeping on the ground, but I honestly didn't mind it. In addition to the one blanket we carry in our roll, we sent out by truck the blankets & comforters from our beds as well as our over coats. Using these as well as the rain coats in our packs was sufficient for me. I really didn't have everything in good shape, however, but by tonight I believe I will.

I'm writing this while supposedly following in the wake of a company engaged in attacking the enemy. And once again I'm lost! I followed the right company this time, but they got themselves lost. I'm lying in the middle of a field while the squad leader is unsuccessfully peering through his binoculars & trying to locate our position in relation to the company as a whole. It appears to me at this stage that one of the greatest difficulties for the army is communication and contact between units.

Wednesday

Yesterday one fellow passed out while standing in front of me in the chow line. I brought
him to, but he was so cold I couldn’t stop his shivering. The litter bearers we had sent for finally came & we carried him down to the Bn. Aid Station where they had heat from a lantern set. Apparently he recovered, for I saw him at noon.

Yesterday morning we also had another accident. While one of the trucks was moving about in the early morning darkness it got off the road, knocked down a tent and ran over two fellows who were sleeping there. The rumor report from the hospital says that one has a broken collar bone & the other a broken arm. They were lucky to get off as easily as they did, if the reports turn out to be true. They really should have known better than to pitch their tents so close to the road, but nevertheless, I imagine the truck driver feels pretty miserable about the whole situation.

Two boxes arrived yesterday, one from you and one from Margarethe. They brought them out here to the bivouac area, and so I’m going to have to eat all the food before we go back for I won’t be able to pack it back in. They really arrived at a most opportune time, however, for everyone was looking for just that sort of treat. Everyone for miles (?) around suddenly discovered I had food and swarmed around like flies around molasses. I saved the fruit juices for myself and there is still a good supply of the other edibles also.

We are out on a problem again today. I keep the notebook handy so that whenever we stop for a rest I can jot down a few more lines & the letter just keeps growing.

Do you remember the hard candies called “Charms” you sent me in one package? They are great for carrying in your pocket while on a hike for quenching your thirst. I’ve not seen any of them out here. Can you get me some more of them?

My ability on the recorder is growing but only slowly. It is difficult to find time to practice. However, the barracks is becoming very conscious of our presence & either stops to listen, tries to make more noise itself or leaves. The sergeant even came up to listen Sunday afternoon.

It seems almost as if we are playing a game of cowboys and Indians. Messengers keep running back & forth with reports for the lieutenants & other officers & they dash around again with their replies. After the problem is over some officer in charge explains what has been going on. Personally, I would prefer to know ahead of time what they are planning & then watch as the plan develops & materializes. Yesterday the officer who was explaining began by telling all that had been going on while we stood about and froze—getting information, making plans, moving troops etc. Today, once again, we move two or three hundred yards, stop, sit down, get up, move a few hundred more yards & repeat the process.

I really am enjoying this camping out idea. You know how much I always enjoyed hiking & camping in the mountains. I’m treating this life in the same way & so am adjusting myself better than a good many others. They growl and complain, but I just make the best of it, making believe I’m on a hiking trip through the White Mountains with Donnie & Tony & enjoy the scenery & observe the country as we go along.

I’ve just learned that today’s hike will take all day & up until approximately ten tonight. If we continue to progress as slowly and easily as we are now, I won’t mind it a bit.

Ever so often we pass by real old log cabins, notched corners and all. They often are either hidden up in the hills or stand out starkly in the middle of a wide, flat field. This whole region reminds me much of the scenic background used for the cowboy & Indian pictures of a few years ago—the flat fields across which the Indians swept upon the few isolated buildings situated in the center of a considerable area of cleared land. These cultivated areas, or grazing sections, seem to be bottom lands along rivers or lands at the bottom of a cup like depression.
with mountains fringing it on all sides. I can just picture the Indians gathered together on the hill side, looking down at the houses, and animals & fields that are so miniature like because of the distance, and making the plans for the attack.

Thank Margarethe for me, won’t you? I'll write her a note later when I get back to camp. She sent me a really great selection of food. It didn't take long for much of it to disappear, but I'm still holding on to some of it for the next few days rations.

Where is George now? Still in Detroit or has he moved again?

We've stopped again, apparently for lunch, by a small stream near one of those old cabins I was telling you about.

[Sketch of a cabin]
This view isn't decrepit enough, but it will give you some idea.

Thursday

Rode in a jeep trailer last evening with a fellow who had fallen & for all practical purposes knocked himself out. At least I didn't have to walk back.

We are out again today & already I've done some minor patching – boils & blisters of the lieutenants.

Letter 34, 1943-02-22 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 3

Feb. 22, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

We are going out on a short three day problem tomorrow & I want to get this note off to you tonight so it will be very brief.

I lost the letter from Donnie that had his address. I'm enclosing a letter to him. Will you add the address (from his mother, I hope) and get it off to him. Later send the address to me.

For goodness sakes get me my income tax information at once. We are to be out in the field all the first of the month of March & I can't make it out then. I need this information as soon as you can get it to me.

1) My salary—
2) Interest on bank account—payable even if not credited during 1942
3) Cost of our license & drivers license
4) Inspections (car) during 1942 &cost
5) Mileage on car – 1942 & state & federal tax rates separate (prob. in “Automobilist”).
6) Insurance while buying car
7) Approximate doctors bills
8) Total cost of use tax stamps on car
9) Car tax – the one paid at (city hall)
10) Personal tax
11) Expenses on car
12) Anything else you think may be deductible.

Received a package from Mrs. Skiff & Miss Todd. I haven't thanked them yet or Margarethe. I simply can't find the time to do it.

I may have an opportunity to work as a clerk in the dispensary, but I rather have my doubts.
Don’t count on it at all for it is only a remote possibility. Perhaps I shouldn’t tell you for perhaps you will be disappointed if I don’t get it.

I lost my pencil out in the field. Do you think you can locate one similar to it & send it to me.

I’m afraid this is all tonight. I have so much to do yet.

Will write again as soon as I can.

Love,
Son

Letter 35, 1943-02-28 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 3

February 28, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Your package of supplies arrived safely. Those frosted drop cakes certainly were good. I ate practically the entire box myself. Knowing that sugar is so scarce I really wish you wouldn’t use so much of your supply in baking cakes for me. I can get along very nicely without them even though they certainly hit the spot. Since canned goods are to be so severely rationed, I wish you wouldn’t try to get me any more fruit juices, for you will need all the supplies for yourself. I realize that chocolate candies also are difficult to obtain. So far we have a plentiful supply of candy here so you needn’t try to buy any for me. I can make out O.K.

I received a card today notifying me that the subscription to the News Times is expiring soon. I'll enclose it for you to take care of. It seems to me that the subscription has run out very quickly.

I've made out my income tax return and it amounts to about $68 tax. The $250 that it deductible is only if the money has been received as army pay. Consequently I cannot deduct in my return. If you can find any way in which it can be further reduced you can have another return made out. I'll sign a separate blank that can be used if you find you can use it.

I was sorry to hear about Aunt Alice’s death. When you visit Aunt Emma remember me to her & tell her I wish her a speedy recovery.

I was surprised to learn about Ed. The order of letters from you was mixed up and the first letter I received said simply he was still in the hospital. Then I received the letter telling what had happened to him. I hope he is out by now.

We went to Muskogee yesterday for a steak dinner & a few other purchases we needed. Didn’t have a very exciting time but enjoyed going to town & seeing civilization again. I hope to go to Tulsa in a few weeks & go sight seeing there.

Last week end three of us walked to Braggs, a small town a couple of miles from the camp. It’s a real frontier, plains town of about one street, two blocks long, saloons, dirty looking general stores, a miserable hotel, little shacks on the edge of town where some of the Okies live. Do you remember the movie “Grapes of Wrath”? Some of the scenes were photographed in Braggs & it certainly has the atmosphere for that kind of picture. Here we are really in the dust bowl as well as in the foot hills of the Ozarks.
Who has taken Doris Jackson's place at school? I've not heard much about it.

The last three days out in the field were miserable because it was so cold but I can take the cold better than the heat.

The fellows & I enjoyed the pictures of the snow & you folks. The fellows from California were amazed to see snow in the yard. They could hardly believe it.

I've been lounging about all day today, but I'm going to settle down & write a few thank you notes. I'll try to write soon again, for I expect to be in camp all this week (K.P. tomorrow or Tuesday – it's getting around to me at last)

Love,
Son

March, 1943
Letter 36, 1943-03-04 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 4

Camp Gruber, Oklahoma
Camp Gruber, Okla.
A.P.O. #88
March 4, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

The package arrived safely and every thing is excellent. I don’t know how you plan it, but every time Ted receives a package I receive one, too. We’re well stocked now, but it won’t last for long.

We had quite a time here Tuesday – wind, snow, and low temperature. We were supposed to go on a problem that day, but after sitting in open trucks for an hour they decided the weather was too bitter and called the affair off. The snow went very quickly that afternoon and is all gone now.

The above picture is most imaginative. If Oklahoma ever looked like this it must have been before the army took over. I’ve never been to Greenleaf Lake but it is very near the camp.

I haven’t been taking my vitamin pills regularly, but I could use them if you sent them. Tell Margarethe the cookies were very nicely wrapped. I didn’t mention that in the letter I sent her.

I don’t see any prospect yet of going away to school. The prospect of working as a clerk also seems to be evaporating. No one gets anywhere here but the dumb-bells. They are the ones that get ahead. The dumber you are the more foolish things you do the better they seem to like it.

There really is very little to write to night. We’ve done nothing but hike and freeze. Nothing else. We don’t seem to be getting anywhere. I haven’t eaten the dried fruits, so don’t send any more for a while. I like them but I don’t seem to eat them.

There is a green music book that I really wanted. I believe it is a “Twice Fifty Five Plus.” You might send it some time.

My letter with the income tax return came back to me for postage also. I hope it has arrived
by now. If you think it wise you can make the complete payment now and get rid of the whole affair once and for all. It probably would be wise to use the fifty dollars I sent and take the rest out of my bank account. Also be sure to save the duplicate copy of the return to use as a safeguard against any mistakes. If you think you can reduce the amount to be paid take care of it if you wish.

Have you received any payment yet? When you do, please tell me how much you get. I'm anxious to know.

I've just had my hair cut and am back again for a few minutes before the lights go out.

I had K.P. Tuesday and made out fine – tired but otherwise good. It won't be my turn for quite some time again I'm glad to say.

I suppose I should try for Officer Candidate School, but I don't feel the need is urgent enough yet. Maybe if I go away to school I'll try after that – and that is a big maybe.

Well, enough for now.

Love,
Son

Letter 37, 1943-03-07 (back to Table of Contents)

Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

March 7, 1943

Dear Mother and Dad,

The weather has been terrifically cold here during the past week. Friday night, while we were out on a problem until about three or four in the morning, we were caught in a real snow storm, and nearly froze to death. We weren't allowed to have fires and so stood about for hours in the biting wind. Finally, because the trucks apparently became lost, we were permitted to light fires for an hour about four in the morning. It was about the bitterest weather I have ever seen. It has calmed down now and is much more comfortable again.

If you have the chance, it might be wise to have my return figured again. One of the fellows had his done over again and found he was able to reduce his tax by several dollars. Perhaps I can do the same.

The candy (fudge) and everything else is excellent. Where are you getting the sugar? I'm afraid you are scrimping at home to get the candy for me. Please don't do that.

How is food rationing affecting you? The restrictions seem quite harsh to me. Don't waste any of them in getting things for me. I can make out very well myself.

I'm not getting many letters, probably because I don't find time to answer the letters. However, I am managing to keep in touch with Jim and Martha.

I received the Valentine note and the two dollars & in my last letter received another two. I'm making out very well in my financial affairs so don't worry about me in that respect.

I have plenty of those Brillo pads now so just save those you have & wait until I need them.

Our ten week course has been finished for quite some time, but there seems to be little change in our work except that we have fewer classes. We are still hoping to away to school
but we can’t be sure of anything. Jim has been inquiring about my chances for getting into the medics in the air corps. He is hoping to talk to his flight surgeon soon and see what we would have to do. I would probably need to get away to school before any transfer could be managed at all. I would like to go to Denver, not only because the school there is good, but also because it would give me a chance to visit in the Rockies.

I received a wedding announcement of Ralph and Lucy’s wedding. Will you get Ralph’s address from his mother so I can send them a note. Do you think the announcement calls for a gift?

I won’t be in line for a furlough for quite some time yet so don’t be expecting me. However those who go away to study usually get a furlough a few weeks after they complete their studies – another reason I would like to go away to school.

So many of the medics have left because they were limited service or were over age that we are now below strength. This probably means we will receive a new group of recruits to fill the detachment. All the older fellows (over 38 I believe) are being automatically discharged and are returning to civilian life. You can be sure they are glad to go.

Have you used my ticket for any of the other concerts? I hope you will, for I think you will find them most enjoyable.

I have a great collection of books & magazines here now, practically an entire library. I’ll probably be sending some home before long for I’m getting so many they are in the way. I might be asking you buy me some special books when I have room for them.

I haven’t heard from Divy at all, but I really did not expect to anyway. She keeps herself so busy that I imagine she doesn’t have time to write.

I’m trying to catch up on my other letters so I’ll close now. Write soon.

Love,
Son

Letter 38, 1943-03-09 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 4

Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

March 9, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

The heading on the paper gives a most inspiring message—the origin of the name of Camp Gruber. The poor man must have done something terrible to have deserved the fate of having this place named for him. Well, everyone can’t be good.

Once in a while I see George Render to speak to but nothing more. I never knew him before I met him on the train.

I learned that one of the men in our barracks had once been a guide in the Carlsbad Caverns & so last evening I was talking to him about them. He’s one that likes to make a good story out of everything, but some of his stories must be true. His name is May, or “Tex” May and is quite a character. If ever I go to New Mexico I must be sure to look him up at the “Sanitary Barber Shop” in Carlsbad & he’ll be sure to take me through the caves himself & guide me to
parts not usually shown to the public – so he says! He helped explore much of the cave himself & put in the lighting system. He had interesting anecdotes about making the trails, geological specimens he found, the inability to find where the bats roost (if roost is the word), a deep pit which has not been explored, areas which they have seen but not able to reach, tales of caves discovered nearby, the importing of guides from California that did not know the cave and lost a group of visitors, and the wonders of the whole cave itself. I would like to take advantage of my acquaintance with him & visit there some time. Maybe even dad could be inveigled into exploring.

I hope you are enjoying the letter heads. Each sheet has a different picture, and I'm saving the whole envelope to send to you.

When I look through this paper, it often makes me think of the collection of letters from your grandfather during the Civil War. Remember the letter heads with various scenes, songs, illustrations, and what not on them? Probably most people think that such paper is new. We can't even be original about war, can we?

I'm hoping to visit the Will Roger Memorial on my way to Tulsa some weekend before long. I was rather hoping to go this Saturday, but I'm afraid we will be busy. Perhaps not, though.

I can guarantee that the fudge is wonderful. I've munched most of it myself and in the last few minutes I've eaten several pieces while writing. Where are you getting the sugar?

Do you ever see Divy to talk to her? Mary Anita probably has been wondering why I've not written in such a long time. If you have the chance, do explain that I have been busy. Do the same for Aunt Onie & tell her I received the “Desert Magazine” & thank her for it.

We had a mild dust storm this afternoon, but I believe it has subsided somewhat now. We have the strongest weather in Oklahoma – it even changes within a very few minutes. The other night, or rather about three in the morning, on a bare mountain top we had a blinding snow storm, yet the next day scarcely any trace of it was visible.

Another rumor is rampant about the Camp – and that is that we will soon be moved to California so the camp can be cleared for new recruits. I won't believe it until I see it.

Remember the code we talked about for keeping in touch with each other. Perhaps we can work it this way – use the first & last letter in each paragraph, but instead of that letter being the one to use, use the letter that precedes it in the alphabet. For example – using the second paragraph above, it would be utilized as follows the W in we and e in visible would be the key letters in that paragraph, but when it is decoded you would read the w as v, for v is ahead of it in the alphabet and e as d for the same reason. The messages would be necessarily short but perhaps help to relieve your mind.

The fellows that came here in October are just beginning to receive their furloughs. Mine isn't on its way.

Seth Ulman, the fellow from California with whom I have been paling around with, has been telling me about a great aunt of his who lives in Greenwich, Conn. She married the famous naturalist Thomas(?) Ernest Seton, who divorced her and married his secretary. He (Seth) was most disillusioned to meet Seton, for he had become a rum hound in his old age & when he met him he was crying & telling about his boyhood. Seton's parents were Scotch Presbyterian & when he wouldn't accept it they apparently had little to do with him. When his mother was dying, his father wouldn't let him go in to see her (and similar sordid details).

Seth comes from a most interesting family. One of his aunt's married an Italian and now is in an English concentration camp. His grandmother is living in Rome.
Enough gossip for now.

Love,
Son

Letter 39, 1943-03-11

Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

March 11, 1943

Dear Mother,

This note will be brief and to the point. I need the following at once. (1) Send the math review book that Miss Townsend gave me just before I left. (2) A small brown book of trigonometric tables & other math information which either is near the above book or in the big rack in my room. Its cover is very soft and is about ½ - ¾ inch thick. Also a small notebook about the size containing math formulae. It prob. is with the other books. Now – ask Divy for help I need a good book or books immediately for reviewing psychology. Ask her to help get me as a loan books on general psychology (not just educational psychology) & psychiatry, books. I might have the opportunity to go away to school & do advanced training in one of various excellent fields. However, I must take an examination very soon and I fear I cannot pass it. However, I would like to review & study if I have time & make a try at it. I was called in about an hour ago & heard about it then. Please get these books here as soon as possible. Don't expect anything imp. to develop from this because I honestly don't. However, I want to make a stab at it for it might let me continue with my college education at gov't expense. Tell Divy my needs & she might get Townie to help. Tell her it's urgent or she will put it off.

Love,
Son

Letter 40, 1943-03-14

Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

March 14, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Received letter cont. $10.00. Also have received package of fruit you were asking about. Don't expect to hear from me for several days, at least until I have taken the exam I hope I'll be able to take. I'm going to hibernate until then.

Send at once a yellow Physics book in the book case in dining room & a chemistry review book in large case in my room. They both are paper covered review texts. They are small books, not full sized text books. I can tell you a little more about all this. Some of us have
been selected to go away to college and continue our studies if we pass an interview and if we pass a stiff examination. Much of the test will be on work I had 6 or 7 years ago and about which I have forgotten a great deal. However, as you see, I am trying to review as much as possible. Perhaps none of the books will arrive in time to help. I'm afraid I may not pass but I'm still going to try. I hope to do work in psychology. However, don't worry about those psychology books. I prob. won't need them as much as I thought I would at first.

Ulman also is to take the exam & he also is quite worried, though he will not admit it. I'm rather hoping that since none of the test that I have heard about so far concerns psychology I might be able to to make it even I don't do so well on the test. Perhaps also the fact that I have my degree may help. I certainly hope so.

You can tell by the writing that I'm in a hurry so I know you will excuse the shortness of this note. Don't worry if you don't hear from me for several days, for I intend to spend all my spare time studying.

Love,
Son

P.S. If I go away to school it also will mean I'll be out of the 88th division and then may be sent later to any group. However, I'm willing to take my chances on that.

Don't mention this to anyone, for I don't want anything said abt. It until I make it (if I do). I'd rather not spread the word & then fail.

T.W.
I have a great deal to do this evening so this is all for now. I'll write more later especially when I learn the results of the test.

Love,
Son

Adams Hotel
P.E Wasson
Manager
Cheyenne at Fourth
Tulsa, Oklahoma
March 20, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Seth and I are spending the weekend here in Tulsa – eating, sleeping, taking baths, etc. It's wonderful.

Tulsa is a very modern city, some very tall buildings but nowhere nearly as large as I expected. The food is good however, and I have done some shopping in second hand book shops (I'll be sending them to you soon).

I'm enclosing a church program I found in one of the pews while I was sightseeing yesterday. The church is built in modernistic style and is most unusual though fairly attractive.

We have received no word about the examination as yet so we are still hoping. However, though I feel I should pass I have my doubts.

We are going out to eat soon, and then I have no idea what we shall be doing – probably to the U.S.O. or to a show.

So long, for a short time.

Love,
Son

P.S. I missed out on a long hike by getting a three day pass this weekend. That's one of the best experiences of this entire holiday.

Letter 42, 1943-03-23 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 4

Camp Gruber, Oklahoma
March 23, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

You probably have received my letter from Tulsa telling you I was there. We certainly had a wonderful time, for Tulsa is about the first civilized spot I have so far found in Oklahoma. The city itself is very new and very clean; Oklahoma itself was not made a state until 1907 so you can see how new the city must be.

The ballet program you sent me brought back memories of the “Met” to me. Do you remember the backdrop for the “Rodeo”? Ulman, who has seen that particular ballet, tells me
that the scene looks exactly like Oklahoma. If the company carried its scenery with it, you may have seen a little slice of Oklahoma atmosphere transferred to the high school stage.

I have a package of books wrapped to send, and they will be on their way as soon as I can get to the post office. Take them out and look through them when they arrive, for I have included some things that might be of interest to you. I have several “pocket books” that I bought as well as a good many Mrs. Skiff sent. They take up so much room I can’t keep them now, but there are several mystery-stories that I’m sure dad would enjoy. If Mrs. Skiff ever says anything about them, tell her that when I was finished with them I sent them home for you to use & keep. I also included an old volume of bound children’s magazines I bought in Tulsa. Be sure to find the folder of pictures I bought from one of the fellows here. The interior shots are those of our barracks & the outdoor ones are on hikes about the camp. (They were taken before I came, I believe, so I am not in any of them). One view shows a white streak in the distance that is the camp.

The large box of cookies, etc. came through safely today & everyone dived in at once. Everything was as excellent as usual. I also received another box from Mrs. Skiff this week.

The package of books from Divy, & the physics & chemistry also have arrived. I’m returning the latter, but am keeping the psychology for a time to read while they are available.

I have passed the examination for going away to school, but unfortunately the prospect is not as bright as I thought. I’m afraid I don’t have enough college credits in psychology to get me into advanced study. I suppose they are right, for I really have had only a little psychology, but I was so hoping to continue in school that I can’t help but be disappointed. However, they have not yet said “no” definitely, and consequently all isn’t lost. “Cum spiro spero”, as the Warner family motto runs.

I was one of the three out of the medical detachment that qualified, and one of thirty five or forty in the regiment that passed the exam. A large number flunked out on the exam, so I feel pretty proud for having passed that. The passing score was 115 and I made 139—not too bad. Maybe I’ll get there yet.

I’m sending back the dollar stump that came on today’s package. I thought you might like it for your collection.

I didn’t get to see the Will Rogers Memorial but I hope to go up there some weekend.

I’ll have another package of books to send in a little while also. I practically have a library here now.

I’m afraid my letters are becoming frightfully dull but I don’t have much to say right now. If I do hear about the school, I’ll let you know at once. (Several others also were turned down because of the number of credits.)

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

Nothing yet about going to school – still hoping, though.
Find in my desk the list of my college credits and send them to me when you find time.
There is no hurry, however.
Have received the various moneys you have sent.
Only about two minutes left so must close at once. Will write again soon, especially when I learn anything about the college proposition.

Love,
Son

March 25, 1943

Dear Mother and Dad,

I'm typing this at the U.S.O. at nine forty five in the morning. Wieck and I came to Muskogee with the idea of going to Claremore to visit the Will Rogers Memorial, but when we arrived here we discovered that the only way we can reach there from here is to go to Tulsa and our passes do not permit that. I guess it is intended that we do not get there today. The only other way to reach there is by train from Braggs and those trains leave in the middle of the night or in the late afternoon. We shall probably go back sometime early today and sit around loafing.

I have heard nothing more about the tests that we took and so have no idea what will happen. Probably I'll hear nothing more about it but I hope that isn't the case.

It certainly seems good to be using the typewriter again. I know I'm not a good typist but I certainly have fun pecking away at the thing.

Lately I have been working at the personnel office helping the clerk from the medics who works there. We work on the payroll, keep the records of the men and so forth. How often and how long I shall be working there I have no idea, but perhaps it might be a good idea to work there as often as I can.

I believe that all the money you have sent has arrived safely. I get paid again this week and thus I guess I can make out very well. My money seem to go a long way now, much farther than it ever did before. That is one advantage of being in the army.

We had a nice breakfast this morning here in town — waffles and syrup, sausage and milk. Incidentally, you probably remember that some time ago I wrote saying that the food in camp was only so so. Since then, however, quite a change has been brought about. Only a few of the medics are eating at that mess hall now, and along with the reduced numbers the food has improved immeasurably. We get plenty of meat and an excellent variety of vegetables. I think the soldiers are faring better than the civilians in that respect.

Have you found my college credits yet. I'm in no great rush for them. I just thought I would
April, 1943
Letter 45, 1943-04-04 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 5

Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

April 4, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Time passes so quickly here when we are busy that, though I know I haven’t written for several days, it seems as if it were only yesterday I mailed my last letter. I know you will understand I can’t write every day, especially when we are out in the field on overnight problems. By the time we get out, go through the problem, and get back into camp again, two or three days have vanished and no letters have been mailed.

Don’t be anxious about not receiving the box of [books?] I mentioned. I haven’t mailed it yet. It is still sitting, fully wrapped & addressed, under my bed, waiting for the time when I can get to the post office. By then I probably shall have another box of the same kind on its way.

Of course you didn’t find the dollar stamp. I forgot to put it in the envelope. I’m making sure, however, that it is in this letter.

The weather is becoming terrifically hot here now—at least extremely hot for me. Many of the others don’t seem to mind it, though.

There is still no definite news concerning further schooling, but I do see signs of encouragement. The monthly regimental news bulletin contained a statement saying that Ulman, Roth and I were going away to school. The fellow who wrote the column gave me this explanation. When he wrote that, he learned from the first sergeant that we definitely were going, for the sergeant even had the names of the schools we were going to attend. What has happened since then I, of course, do not know; but it may be one of two things. Perhaps the whole plan has been dropped, and we are out all together. On the other hand, those in command might simply be waiting for further instructions about when and exactly where we are to go. I hope the latter alternative is the correct one. I also know that the three of us are being excluded from any long range planning the staff sergeants are making. In other words, they don’t expect us to be with them long. Perhaps I am just dreaming again, but I hope not.

If I don’t go away to school, I may be getting a furlough in a month or two. Naturally I had rather go to school than have the furlough, if I can’t have both – not that I don’t want to come home, of course. I think you understand what I mean.

Will you mail me my black leather zipper bag? I want to have it handy, just in case. Perhaps they will send me to school in the east and I can use it while visiting home. However, I’m afraid that’s wishing to much, isn’t it, even for a dream.

Love,
Son
If you put anything in the bag when you send it, will you enclose my good sunglasses, please. The glare from the sun at times is extremely strong, and tends to bother my eyes and head. Sometimes it very closely resembles the blinding light reflected from snow.

In regard to food—I had rather not get a big supply on hand in case I am suddenly moved. I still have a package of cheese left as well as candy, dried fruits, figs, a can of spam I bought several months ago, etc. I don't want to have to throw it away and so I had rather you would not send me any food for the time being. Of course, if you put in a few cookies, etc. that are readily edible I won't mind. However, when it begins to get warm please don't try to bake things for me, for it isn't worth the effort.

I'll try to remember to enclose a few of the mills that are used for taxes in Oklahoma. I have also found an old nickle you might like.

I hope you will continue to have your teeth taken care of. How many have you had extracted since I left? Don't give me any excuses, either.

Again I must ask you to make my excuses for not writing to others. I just don't find the time.

Ulman is in the hospital with measles. Let's hope I don't get them, especially during this weather.

Well, enough for now. More latter, especially if I hear I'm going to leave this place.

Love,
Son

P.S. I just remembered my driver's license application. There is no hurry about taking care of it but I thought I would send it when I thought of it. I don't know whether you need to give them my military address or not.

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**Letter 46, 1943-04-06** (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 5

Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

April 6, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Did you detect a slight touch of laughter in my words when I wrote that Seth has the measles? Well, I should not have even snickered. I think I have them, too! I'm now writing this in a single room in the station hospital where they have penned me up for observation, pending the appearance of more definite symptoms. The nodes in the back of my neck are swollen and I have a slight temperature, but no rash has put in its appearance as yet. The doctor isn't sure I have them, but he is taking no chances.

I brought a pile of books and my portfolio with me and thus hope to catch up on my “readin' and writin.'” This may prove to be a wonderful vacation, especially since the German measles usually are not very severe. (Incidentally two other friends from my barracks rode over in the ambulance with me, suffering from the same complaint. Joe Filipp is in the next room, separated by a lavatory into which both our rooms open. They are not sure has them either).

I asked the mail orderly in my barracks to mail the two boxes of books for me just before
I left for the hospital. They probably will not arrive for several days, but when they do please be sure to take care of the library books from D.T.C.

I enclosed in one of the packages a copy of our regimental magazine that contained the item about Roth, Ulman, and I attending school. I hope it is true. You will find the particular paragraph well marked, the page being indicated by a slip of yellow paper.

The newspaper has been arriving very regularly and it certainly is good to receive it. If you learn any further information about Jack that might not be in the paper, do let me know, won't you. I hope he isn't sent out to this place, however, because I can see it is going to be miserably hot this summer.

You have asked several times about the amount that is deducted from my pay for your allotment. It is only twenty two dollars, so you see that leaves me plenty. I turned in all the money I had put away in my money belt when I came in here, and discovered, to my surprise, that I had eighty five dollars hidden in reserve for the time my furlough puts in its appearance. You see, I don't have any monetary worries just at present, - fortunately.

Woops, time out for tomatoe juice! Can you imagine that? The nurse (a lieutenant) just brought in a glass of juice, almost the first I have had since I left home, and it really hits the spot. I'm almost contemplating a permanent transfer to the hospital simply because of the quality of the food here.

I've managed to open my window a little from the bottom and am reveling in the brief puffs of breeze that assail me ever so often. Apparently there is little air stirring, however, for I just overheard a doctor and nurse talking about the possibility of being transferred to Africa where they might at least find a tree to sit under. I'm not the only one who doesn't like the hot weather.

Several fellows in the detachment are leaving for training in the hospitals scattered about in near by states; but apparently I was not considered because I am on a list of prospective candidates for specialists training in other fields. Here I am back on that topic again. I guess I had better forget it until something definite happens.

Do you ever hear anything about Roger, or Bill Nock or Bill Chambers? I have been wondering what has become of them. Roger still isn't asking for money, is he?

Don't worry if you don't hear from me for a short while. I really intend to catch up on my other correspondence & reading and so may not write for a day or two.

Love,
Son

Letter 47, 1943-04-08 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 5

Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

April 8, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Well, I've made the grade. The measles are really here. I've been moved to the ward now, with the rest of the measles cases, and I find it much more agreeable than being cooped up
alone in a private room. One of the fellows here came from Devons with me on the train, his home being also in Connecticut. Two others are from my own barracks. I really feel quite at home.

Tell me how much postage was on the package of books. I forgot to tell the mail orderly to insure them, so I hope they arrive in good condition.

The nurse just told me that two more medics from our outfit have the measles and are to be with us soon. I wouldn't be surprised if the entire regiment comes down with them.

I never such a healthy looking bunch [sic] of sick fellows in my life. German meales seldom makes any one very ill, and this group here is no exception.

I imagine that if you have sent my zipper bag already, it will arrive before I get out of the hospital. I hope I'll be able to use it before too long.

There is nothing to write about here in the hospital. I guess I've had my say. Maybe later in the week I'll have some more news to send along to you.

Incidentally, when you write, just send to my regular address. The mail will be forwarded [sic].

Love,
Son
I heard from Alice Halpine this week also. She was telling me that Aunt Em is recuperating in New Milford.

The fellow in bed next to me, Bob Wakelee, comes from Wolcott, Conn. and knows & lives near Elizabeth Warner. Another fellow, Waters, across from me, comes from Thomaston & worked on the “Waterbury Republican.” There are several other New England fellows here also, one of the nurses even being from Massachusetts. This is just a little corner of New England transplanted to Oklahoma.

Give my best wishes to those to whom I have not written recently. You’ll know who they are when they begin to ask what has become of me.

Love,
Son
Jim's address. Perhaps Jim never received the letters I sent to him while he was in Oregon, and
now that both of each will have each other addresses I hope we shall be able to correspond
once I again.

I really did not need the extra ten dollars you sent, but I will save it for an emergency.
I don't need any more air mail stamps for the time being. I have a really good supply on
hand now.

When you hear from me again I expect to be back in the barracks, maybe on the way to
school, I hope.

Love,
Son

Letter 50, 1943-04-18 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 5

Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

April 18, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Here I am, back at the barracks, and safely home from the hospital. While I was away a
good many changes took place. Four fellows left to study for a medical technician's job with
the detachment. A good many referees from Texas also had move in to stay for a few weeks.
They are to act as umpires in the problems we are to have shortly. Consequently, the barracks
is once again packed full.

Something very strange is in the air here today. None of us have been permitted to leave
the camp & I understand that all civilians are restricted from entering today. There are rumors
of a big parade and a reviewing stand being built at the parade grounds. Many think that Pres.
Roosevelt is visiting at the camp – as some jokingly say, for the purpose of fishing at Greenleaf
Lake. I wouldn't be at all surprised if someone of importance is here.

Have you seen any of the new pennies? I received one in change the other evening at the
P.X. and will try to remember to send it along with this note.

I hear from Miss Todd quite regularly for she fortunately does not always wait to hear from
me. I also heard from Lyrel (I think I told you all this at the hospital.

I attended the Palm Sunday service at the church today with several fellows from the
detachment. A new chaplain has been added to the ranks there and I think he is a good
addition. I hope so, for something is needed.

I'm listening to the St. Matthew Passion as presented by the Philharmonic this afternoon.

Wednesday Noon

I just came in from a problem held in the field since Monday. Naturally, this is the first
opportunity I have had to write.

I could not send the letter I started Sunday and when I shall be able to mail this I have
no idea. We are under orders to to [sic] communicate with no one what happened at camp
Sunday until it is publicly announced. I'll mail this when I'm permitted.
Sunday Pres. Roosevelt (and who else I don’t yet know) reviewed the troops of the 88th Division. I strained my eyes and finally was able to catch a glimpse of the President sitting in his car. A special reviewing stand had been erected that permitted his car to be driven directly into the stands. For some reason we are not permitted to divulge the above information. I’ll mail this when we are permitted.

I have received the package, the bag, and the money safely.

No news about the school yet. I’m beginning to lose hope of ever going. It seems that they might give us some facts before long.

I heard from Jim Gallagher & Jim Birtles today.

The news just came over the radio that the President visited Camp Gruber recently, so I guess I am free to mail this letter soon.

Thanks for the Easter greetings. The card & the money came just a very few minutes ago. I’m sorry I wasn’t able to get one for you but I haven’t been to town recently. I may go to Tulsa Saturday, however, and attend Easter services there.

The change in the Oklahoma scenery since I first went to the hospital is remarkable. I never would have believed that those gaunt, desolate trees contained the slightest trace of life, but sure enough, when the sun shone long enough to convince the trees that Spring once again had swung around to its correct space in the circuit, leaves just sprang out of the apparently dead limbs. One day there were none and the next day there they were. The woods began to look more like home, but unfortunately they are not.

The nights are most beautiful – a great yellow moon making the ground spectral because of the enormous number of shadows. You find yourself stepping over shadows and then bravely tripping over real obstacles. Usually early in the evening the stars glisten and sparkle with a brilliance comparable to the stars as we see them on a snappy crisp evening during a New England winter. As the moon rises, however, the stars diminish in proportion until only the nearest & brightest remain visible. Surprisingly enough, despite the heat generated during the day, when night puts in its presence the warmth disappears almost at once until the weather likewise is similar to the New England winter about which I was just reminiscing.

A wild grass that those familiar with the region call “peppermint grass” grows abundantly in certain areas. When the blades are crushed by passing feet, the aroma of peppermint is given off and the air actually reeks with it until it becomes almost nauseating. Personally, I can’t place the odor as peppermint, but would catalogue it in a class similar to that given off by meadow-sweet, only more pungent and mint odored.

I hope you are able to get plenty of “Charms” for I may be asking you to send more of them before long. They are very convenient, for I have managed to find room in my medical pouches for candy and often a small magazine like “The Reader’s Digest.” The candy is especially helpful, for some times our meals do not arrive on time in the field and I fall back on my own supplies to tide me over the desperate period. Oftentimes during the day we lie about in the field for hours with nothing to do. It is then that I manage to read (as well as often acquire a good sunburn).

Have I ever told you much about how we spend our time? If I haven’t I certainly shall do so soon.

Time for chow, and I certainly don’t want to miss that. I’m eating with L Company now,
and find their food to be quite good.

Love,
Son

Letter 51, 1943-04-25 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 5

United States Army
Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

April 25, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

We are planning to be in the field for a problem all this week so I shall probably be unable to write for several days.

I have a good many things I want to write about, but I am afraid I won't be able to remember all of them.

Are you still getting the “Saturday Evening Post” regularly? If you are, will you please save for me the first April edition. It is the one that has the Norman Rockwell April Fool cover. There is an article in there that I want to save for my files.

Also will you try to find a copy of the May issue of “Science Digest” and also keep that for me. It is a magazine about the size of the “Reader's Digest.” Probably Murphy has it in stock.

I'm sending home two more packages, one of books and one of letters. When I will be able to get them off in the mails I have no idea, but they are already wrapped & addressed.

No news about school. It probably is all off.

I had several unexpected correspondents recently – Mrs. Newlan, Aunt Grace, Jim Gallagher, a answer to a letter I sent to Herbert J. Wilcox in Waterbury, two boxes of home made candies from Miss Todd, a get well card from Mim Silcox (Martha's friend from Granby) and a little gift book from Lyrel. A real letter fall!

Which of the Gallagher boys wanted the post cards? I have wrapped the letter you wrote that explained about it and can't remember which one it was. I'll be glad to send the cards to him, as soon as I know which one to mail them to.

I simply don't see when I shall find the time to do all the letter writing I suddenly find that I should do, especially now that we are in the field so often and for so long a time. I'll try to get some of my notes off while I am out there.

You mentioned the list of history questions college students were expected to know. I really would like to see them. However, if they should prove to be too bulky to mail and especially if you think they might be difficult for me to return, do not send them.

We probably shall be going on manoeuvres to Louisiana in a few weeks. I'm hoping I shall be away from here before then. There have been rumors that all those who are on the list for attending school will be kept in camp until they are called to school. I rather doubt that, however. Everyone is trying desperately to get in some branch of service beside the 88th Division. They seem quite disgusted with the set up as it is here. However, probably every outfit is in the same condition before it has more complete field experience.
I missed getting the Muskogee paper that told about the President’s visit. However he ate here & enjoyed the meal that was served, and all the rest of the usual blah!  
I really am too sleepy and weary to continue further tonight (11:05) and so I must close. Will try to write while I am in the field.

Love,  
Son

May, 1943

Four Postcards (back to Table of Contents)

There are four post cards at the beginning of the file:

1. Lover’s Rock, Danbury, CT: 
   From TW’s father:
   
   May 23, 1943
   Danbury, Conn
   
   Hello, Sonny,
   
   How are you tonight all right I hope. We went to Church today, then went to Grandma for dinner then went up to Ed folks. We are going to plant some more garden soon. I think we will get some good weather it is clear to-night. Let us know if there anything you want. How about your license you didn’t send your blank back. Hope we see you soon. Love, Dad

2. Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, OK: [blank on reverse]

Letter 52, 1943-05-03 (back to Table of Contents)

Camp Gruber
Oklahoma

May 3, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

I’ve made several vain attempts to write during the past week, but my efforts all came to naught. I think I’ll make it tonight, however.

Last week we were out in the field on one of those division problems we are cursed with – five whole days of sleeping & eating, and living and trying to keep clean in the field. I really don’t mind them very much except for the heat. It is beginning to get really hot here now, but nothing at all like what it will be later. I’ve discovered that salt tablets help, however, and so swallow them regularly. They replace the salt lost through perspiration and thus tend to counteract the feeling of weakness that would otherwise result. (I suggest you might find them helpful yourself when the real summer weather strikes New England)
Fortunately we have changed to our summer khaki uniforms already. They are much cooler than the wool O.D.’s and I also like their style, what little they have. As usual, mine are several sizes too large around the waist but comfortable at the hips. I’m hoping that future launderings will rectify the mistakes made by the army tailors in trying to fit my unusual build. If not, I’ll call in the help of the seamstress at the P.X. Something will have to be done.

I received your letter containing the ten dollars. Please don’t think you need to send me the extra money, for I really don’t need it. I’m not at all extravagant in my tastes, you know, and so need little money to satisfy my wants and still have a good time. Keep the extra money until I really need it.

I went to Tulsa over the week end, just to get away from the dullness of the camp. Practically the entire camp was free to leave and practically everyone was trying to leave, at the same time. After standing in line for an hour and a half we were finally informed that the buses no longer stopped at that particular stop. You can well imagine how much we appreciated that news. We decided to walk to Braggs and take the train from there to Claremore and then to Tulsa by bus. About five hundred others had the same idea. The crowd was so dense that I thought, I, and everyone else would actually be crushed trying to get into the coaches. There were so many that a great many of us rode in the baggage car to Claremore, trying to balance ourselves as the car swayed from side to side as we rushed along. It was a good experience, however, I wouldn’t have missed it for a good deal.

We became separated from one of our group and missed the bus while looking for him in Claremore. Of course I didn’t want to waste the time, so I convinced the others that we should hike a mile out of town & see the Will Rogers’ Memorial. I knew it would be closed at that hour, but I wanted the satisfaction of at least seeing the outside when I was so near. The building itself is very attractive, sitting on the hillside overlooking the city. I was surprised to learn that even the people in Claremore do not know whether or not Will Rogers is buried there. However, many feel that he has been secretly disinterred from his original burial place and placed at night in the tomb prepared for his body at the memorial. I’m not much disturbed at not visiting the whole memorial, for I understand its contents consists mostly of his personal possessions. The things he owned were nowhere nearly as important as the thoughts and ideas he had. He probably is one of the very few philosophers that America has had that has appealed to the public at large – very home spun in its expression but basically very excellent. Maybe he is Oklahoma’s Socrates.

The package of food was excellent as usual. I still don’t comprehend how you manage to get all the supplies you do. I have a feeling you are denying yourself, but I know you will never admit that you are.

The Easter egg was excellent – really the best bought candy I have had in months. I finished the last of it tonight, managing to piece it out this long.

The set of history questions are most revealing. I discovered how little I knew, and that was mighty, mighty little.

Yes, I had a card from Mildred.

I’m thinking very seriously of putting in my application for O.C.S. (Officers Candidate School) very soon. The school proposition doesn’t seem to be panning out, so I think it would be wise to get another iron in the fire. There seems to be no chance for advancement here, practically everything having been filled before we came or filled since by those who had been here before we came. I haven’t given up all hopes, however. I still think we should be called
away before long.

Are you able to get films in town? We tried while in Tulsa and were totally unsuccessful. The U.S.O. loaned us a camera and we planned to take pictures but of course that proved to be impossible.

The U.S.O.’s really are excellent, especially the one in Tulsa. It is wonderful to have a place where you are free to go in and sit down and leave whenever you wish while in town. You can check your suitcase etc., wash, shave, shower, read, eat, dance, sing, watch movies, play ping pong, listen to music etc. at various times during the day. Even the little towns seem to be managing one of some sort. It is hard to express how much they mean while visiting in a strange region. I think all the soldiers subconsciously realize how fortunate they are to have them, but how many actually actively realize it is hard to say. A surprising number do, I imagine.

I’m enclosing two cards I bought in Tulsa that might be of interest to you.

My eyes just won’t stay open much longer. A day in the hot sun makes one so sleepy at night.

Love,
Son

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Mother's Day Card (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 6

Mother's Day Card
Dear Mom,

I've sent under separate cover a very little gift that will help keep you busy with one of your hobbies. I hope you will enjoy it, and perhaps you will discover you own a fortune hidden in your modest collection.

Love,
Son

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Letter 53, 1943-05-06 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 6

Camp Gruber
Oklahoma

May 6, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

While waiting to hear any more news that may be forthcoming concerning the school situation, I have decided it might be wise to submit my application for O.C.S.—just in case. I'm rather hoping everything will clear up within a few weeks. I'm afraid I'm going to need your help again.

In order to qualify for O.C.S. it is necessary that I withdraw my IAO [Available for Non-
combat military service] classification. Inasmuch as I hope to continue in the same type of work I am now in, I guess I can convince myself that it is the proper track to follow. I can't get anywhere in my present situation, and I know I could be of much greater value in a more advanced position. As you know, my record here contains no IAO classification. Will you find out from Mr. Lynch if that classification is on record in Washington or just in the Danbury board's records. Be very discreet about your questioning and try to cause as little fuss as possible. If the record has not been transmitted to D.C. I can write to the board at home and ask it to see that my classification is changed. Otherwise I shall have to write to Washington. Perhaps Mr. Lynch can tell you to whom I should direct any mail if it is necessary to communicate with the capital.

I hope you will rush this through as soon as possible, but please don't inconvenience yourself too much. A day or two won't matter. We probably shall be going on manoeuvers in a few weeks and I certainly want everything in order by then.

I [am] afraid my little Mother's Day gift will be rather late in arriving. I found after I had mailed it that it did not have sufficient postage & thus I had to remail it this evening. It's not much, but I think you will enjoy it.

I also mailed a package of books—another one! And I still have my zipper bag full. I should have quite a library ready for me when I get home. Be free to use any of them you wish. I think you would enjoy “Wuthering Heights” especially.

Also find from Mr. Lynch what my order number is (or rather was) under the draft set up.

I found a Jefferson nickel with an S above the dome of Monticello. It was new to me but probably very familiar to you. I'll send it along, however, hoping it may interest you. Are there any special coins you would like to have me be on the watch for. If so, send me a list & I'll see what I can do.

I received Dad's card today & the view of the Pershing Bldg. began to make me nostalgic for home. I certainly wish I were back there now.

I'm still not writing letters but I just don't seem to get around to it. I must catch up before long.

I'll write more later.

Love,
Son

TW keeps wondering what the scoop is about school. He has learned about life in Uncle Sam's army, i.e., rumors abound, but no one knows what is really going to happen. It's a real feeling of powerlessness. His change of mind about OCS suggests a desire to shape his future, rather than allowing it to be shaped for him. Waiting for school is not in his control, but signing up for OCS is, even at the expense of giving up “consci” status.
Dear Mother & Dad,

Say, isn’t the news from Tunis wonderful tonight? It looks as if the war in Africa is almost over. I do hope so, for it’s been a long struggle. Perhaps Germany will soon be convinced of the inevitable outcome of the war & surrender to the allies. (It’s a good dream anyway.)

I suppose I shouldn’t write about the renewal of my hopes of going to school, but it may be so. Ted went before the board today and it looks as if they are only waiting for the new college semesters to begin before sending a new group of army students. Perhaps I’ll be amongst those sent. Gosh, I hope so.

If I do get a furlough it probably will be in the next two or three weeks. If the school proposition comes to a head soon, I may lose out on my leave by continuing with my studies. I feel the loss would be counteracted by the value of the Training I would receive. I also might be able to go on to officers training from there.

I think the only schools available are in this section—the University of Oklahoma, University of Louisiana, & Texas A & M—perhaps others. However, this does not mean that other colleges are not available. These are the only ones I have heard about.

I heard from Miss Russell today concerning Kappa Delta Pi. It has been decided by the Executive Council that those of us who are in the armed forces can receive the initiation in absentia. I need to add $1.50 for extra initiation fees & $.75 for local dues to the five dollars I have already paid. I really find it difficult to get to the post office for money orders – I was going to ask you to get the money up to her personally but never mind. Tomorrow is Saturday & I have found a post office that is near at hand (at least more so than the only one I originally knew) and I will get it off myself. Thanks just the same. Anyway, I think it would be more business like for me to send her the money myself.

The paper came today and in it I saw a special notice requesting that individual board members not be approached. Inasmuch as that is the case it probably would be wise not to try to see Mr. Lynch himself. What do you think? If the school plan works as I hope it will I may not need a reclassification soon anyway.

I broke my watch the other day. The crystal just up and disappeared as did one of the hands. Will Harold be able to fix it for me soon if I send it back? I don’t want to get it in one of the jewelers in Muskogee and not have time to get it out. I’m rather lost without it, but I’m planning to buy a cheap dollar watch in town to tide me over until I get the wrist watch fixed. I also would like new radium on the hands so I can read it at night. The luminosity is worn off now.

I received another card from Dad today. It does seem good to hear from him.

I want to get a few more notes off so I must close tonight.

Love,
Son

TW’s elation about the reported success in Tunis shows the naïve hope that the war will be over before he is needed “over there.” It’s a little surprising that a “consci” would feel like that. But he appears to be changing.
Letter 55, 1943-05-08

United States Army
Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

May 8, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

I wrapped a package to return home this afternoon and will get it off as soon as the rain lets up so I can reach the post office without swimming. Be sure to open it as soon as it comes. I'm sending home the recorder for safe keeping. I haven't found time to do any practicing on it and if we go on manoeuvers it is sure to be injured. I put my wrist watch in the box with the recorder. See what you can do to get it repaired. The stones are ones I picked up in Oklahoma – one looking peculiarly like an arrow head. One is a fossil typical of many found in the region.

I've managed to cut down the quantity of junk in my barracks' bag considerably – just in case I need to move suddenly. I can get along without food for a while because I am afraid it will take up too much room in my supplies.

I'm keeping the round tin cake container you sent long ago, for storing things while on manoeuvers.

The rain has let up & so I'm going to get away at once. Will write soon again.

Love,
Son

Letter 56, 1943-05-10

Camp Gruber
Oklahoma

May 10, 1943

Dear Mother,

Just another letter, I've mailed the other one & can't get at it. I think I've found the title for the Barnes & Noble book I wanted. It is one of the College Outline Series

Title:
General Psychology

They may have published another title to replace this particular one. I would send for this myself, but when packages come C.O.D. it is difficult to get to the main post office to pay for them.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

We have had such bad rain storms here for the last three days that our manoeuvres have been cancelled until Wednesday. –not because of the weather, naturally, (knowing Gen Sloan), but because so many of the fellows were stranded in Tulsa, Muskogee, etc. I cut some items from the local paper you might enjoy.

I've been so hungry for good home made food the last week and that I must let down & let you send my another package. Make it compact, though, & things that will be readily eaten. Tomato juice would be O.K. however. Believe it or not, I have a can of Treat which I bought just before meat rationing went into effect & have not used it yet.

I lost the good jack knife you sent me but have just bought a good hunting knife to wear on my belt to replace it. They are difficult to get, but I was fortunate enough to get in on a lucky buy. It cost me $3.82 but I feel it was worth it. The knife of that size is fine for cutting sticks for splints, or for snake bites, etc. Can you get me a small whet stone to give it a sharper edge – just a small one now!

I think perhaps that I shall take a sight seeing trip through the Ozarks in a week or so if I can manage it. There is an article in the recent Geographic [May 1943] about that section.

No, don't see [sell?] those magazines I was asking about. I have read the articles I simply want to save them for reference.

Will you write to Barnes & Noble & ask them to send me a college review book in psychology – or something of that nature. I believe you have a catalog of their publications. The college preparation or review manuals are all listed together on one page. –prob. near the back. The cost should be about 60¢ to $1.50 – not much more.

Perhaps I'll be getting a furlough soon. Let's hope so.

Love,
Son

May 10, 1943

Dear Mother and Dad,

I am working as the emergency man at the dispensary, but inasmuch as it is Sunday there is very little to be done this evening. By the way, I am using the typewriter in the office and as
you notice it isn't working especially well. I refuse to take the blame for all the mistakes here. I insist that the machine is at fault.

Ted has just learned that he is to go back to college this week. I imagine that he will learn to specialize in Greek, for he can speak, read and write in that language. And I understand that he is to attend Oklahoma A & M in Clearwater or Stillwater. Another fellow who can manage French with great efficiency also is going with him. I still have hopes but they are getting mighty slim.

My heavens, what a letter. It looks as if it were written in code. I just can't make this thing work correctly. You can see what happens to machines like this when they are taken out into the field and bounced around in trucks and jeeps.

I'm afraid that I forgot to answer all the questions that you ask but I just don't seem to have the letters handy when I write. Yes I have received the two dollars that you sent and also the package. You can't imagine how good that food tasted after going hungry for good food like that for such a long time. I think that I shall go back to the barracks when I am finished tonight and have a little feast.

It is raining once again here and there are some reports that the river may rise soon and cut off the camp again. The river is still very high and the bottom lands still under water. In order to reach Muskogee it is necessary to cross the Arkansas River and when the water came up over the floor of the bridge naturally no one could get through. Personally, I saw very little of the flood itself, except for a fleeting glance down into the valley during a recent problem. Even the little I saw looked pretty bad. It certainly cause a great deal of property damage.

Our particular detachment is becoming very short handed because so many of the fellows have left because of over age, or been transferred because of physical reasons or are going to school or to Officers Training School. In fact, we don't even have enough men for litter bearers.

It has seemed good to receive those cards from dad every day, but at times I'm afraid they make me homesick to see the places shown on the cards. I'm hoping that the furlough will be coming along before long. I'll try to telegraph to tell you that I am on my way if I can manage. I have no idea when I shall be leaving if I leave at all. I think I shall try to manage it so that I can get off at Brewster, but probably the through trains will not stop there for me. In that case I shall have to go to New York and come home that way.

Love,
Son

Monday

P.S. Received the watch & film safely, & still have plenty of food on hand. The cheese was especially good, and crackers also. I didn't receive the three day pass & so won't be going to the Ozarks right away. Will try to write soon again.
United States Army
Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

May 18, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Please send me Marums’ address & get Helen’s from her mother. I didn’t intend to send them but now that they are at home, keep them for me. I’ve been wondering where those two letters went.

If I manage to get a furlough it will be in a very few days, for we are to leave for manoeuvres in a couple of weeks or so. I’ll just have to wait and see, and hope.

Ted left for school today, but Seth and I (and Roth) are still here. We probably are out of the running, but I’m keeping up my hopes until the very end. We are losing a good number of men and are becoming way under strength.

I intend to submit my O.C.S. application soon. I suppose I shouldn’t wait so long, but I’m still hoping the T.S.T.P. will come through.

I’m writing to the Board tonight to have my classification changed. I feel I’m doing the right thing, even though my basic feelings have changed very little.

Did I tell you I had taken out $10,000 insurance? Just for the record, I have. As for bonds, I’ll find out later about them.

More later.

Love,
Son

May 22, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

I have no idea of the time when this letter will reach you, for the camp is isolated by the floods you have probably been reading about in the newspapers. I personally have seen nothing of the flood itself, for we are situated high on a plateau above the Arkansas River valley, and thus have no actual contact with the situation. Many of the surrounding towns are completely inundated and the inhabitants transferred to our camp area. The citizens of entire towns are under the jurisdiction of the army in Camp Gruber right now.

The electricity has been off for several days. My pocket flashlight has proven its value, for with all the illumination in the entire area non-existent, we have great difficulty in navigating, even early in the evening.

Water has been rationed for two days, and tonight the whole system has been totally shut off. Every available container has been pressed into service as an emergency reservoir – my canteen, canteen cup, steel helmet and the tin cake tin you sent me being my personal supply
depots. “

Water, water everywhere
Nor any drop to drink”

You see, the water has risen so high that the pumps have been forced to cease operation.
The water scarcity has become quite a distressing problem, but has affected us very little as yet.
The flood waters probably will recede before it has a chance to become really troublesome.

The Individual companies’ water supplies are under constant guard so that those with a
non social philosophy will not be able to take advantage of the situation. All day and all night
long someone is watching the water our barracks has in containers, inside and out.
The rain is not over yet. It began to sprinkle again this evening just about chow time.
Fortunately, however, it seems to have stopped again now, and lets hope no more comes until
everything is cleared up.

I've begun to wonder if every Mexican can play a guitar. We have a few in our barracks and
when they and their friends get together they produce all kinds of strange sounds and take
turns plunking out all the melodies they have apparently ever heard.

I've become quite apprehensive about my furlough. Unless the water goes down soon there
will not be time enough available for me to get home. It doesn't seem quite fair, but I'm afraid
that is the way it may be. Several of those who started for home just as the waters began to
rise were caught in nearby cities before they could get clear of the flood area and probably
are fretting away their furlough time in some isolated Oklahoma or Missouri city. I'd rather be
here with at least the hope and prospect of a furlough to come than they are, watching their
few days of freedom slipping by.

I have received not mail whatsoever for several days. A few letters have trickled in from
the east but must have been interrupted in their transit. The small amount of mail that does
come in the camp is dropped by plane in sacks on to the parade ground.

Save some of the news items in the Danbury paper about the flood. We hear very little, for
of course there are no radio facilities nor newspapers.

I have submitted my application for O.C.S. hoping to get in the Medical Administration
Corps.

I believe the school proposition is out. I have had too many years of schooling without
having specialized in one of the particular fields in which they are interested. Perhaps it is just
as well. Keep the idea of O.C.S. to yourself for the time being.

What is Ralph's address. The letter I sent to him at the address you gave me has been
returned.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

Well, it’s no furlough for me now. When the flood broke loose, I just took the fact for granted, especially when an order was issued cancelling all passes and furloughs. However, just a few minutes ago I was called before the first sergeant and Major Perrin (the company commander) [as well as several other captains (Mincks & Stratman)] and given the opportunity to choose between a furlough and the chance that I would miss the opportunity for my O.C.S. interview. It may sound strange, but I thought it wise to see about O.C.S. situation, which will be taken care of within the time I would be on furlough. I might not have another chance at a hearing for months. Please don’t be too disappointed, for you don’t know how hard a decision it was for me to make. If I pass the interview I won’t feel so bad. If I don’t pass, I made a foolish decision.

A good many others have also not received furloughs, and as far as I can see, they are not even being asked about them. Ulman (for he was with me) and I must be special characters.

I had my preliminary interview today, (for O.C.S.) and presume everything is O.K. At least it should be, for it really is only a formal, routine measure through which everyone goes.

I was barracks guard today, and did nothing but sweep the floor a few times and put hot packs on one of the fellow’s knees who got himself banged up in a fight.

You asked about working in the dispensary. My job simply was to help care for any patients who might wander in during the day, give out pills, run errands etc. On Sunday there is only one sick call and very little else to do. I made out fine.

The box of food arrived today in good condition. I’ve just been munching one of those excellent cup cakes while writing this note. I’ve already eaten the box of potatoe chips. Everything else is handy by the side of my bed.

The book from Barnes & Noble is just what I wanted. Thanks a million.

I received a letter and two dollars from Mildred yesterday. She was asking about my furlough, hoping to meet in New York with tickets for a show. I’ll try to write to her soon, and explain.

No more boxes, please. I’ll wait to see how things go in the next few weeks. Military censorship prohibits my saying anything more definite about my plans.

I’ll be sending my zipper bag home with some extra things that will not be easy to manage. I’m afraid I won’t be able to keep all the books I would like, but perhaps that is just as well. I’ll have to learn to get along with less.

One of the clippings I’m enclosing shows the type of barracks we live in. Inasmuch as I can’t take pictures, at least I can give you this much of an idea of what the camp is like.

I’m planning to catch up on my current events during the next day or so. I know the interviewing officers ask a great deal about news & current events and I want to be on my toes. I wish I had better news facilities here. A news sheet is issued, but I don’t manage to get a hold of it often. The local papers can’t compare with those in the East.

The rest of the fellows are out on a big dress parade & retreat ceremony but I’m staying in writing – the barracks guard again. I can hear the band now, going down one of the nearby streets. The sun is boiling hot out now (5:30) after another rainstorm this morning. Oh, for New England’s weather.

At last we have running water again, but no order has come through regarding it and consequently we can’t take showers. I’ve had but one cold (brr) shower in over a week. All my clothes are dirty – I don’t even have a clean pair of socks, for the laundry naturally was put
out of operation also. Everything will be rushed through now, however.

Please don't be too disappointed. Perhaps when I do manage to get home I'll be wearing gold bars. Perhaps not.

Love,
Son

P.S. All the others are getting furloughs, I've just heard. Well, I've made my decision.

June, 1943

Letter 62, 1943-06-01 (back to Table of Contents)

Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

June 1, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

I received the last two packages which you sent, today. The watch was excellently taken care of. Did you have a new face put on or was the old one repainted? As yet I haven't sent my suit case & other extras. Perhaps I will send them off by railway express – collect. That is the way they suggest here.

I hope you don't feel too disappointed about my furlough. Probably I made a foolish decision, but only time will tell. I did so want to get home for a few days. I was incorrect in my surmise insert in the post script in my last letter – a good many did not get furloughs or even a chance for a furlough. A surprising number from the various companies around here have gone AWOL in order to get home for a little while. I think that is foolish too.

Dear old Gen Sloan won't give us a minute's peace. We are having problems all this week, for what earthly reason I can't see. Practically nothing is accomplished thereby, for we do the same old thing over and over & make the same mistakes—while he sits back in the camp comfortably enjoying himself, perhaps deigning to dash out in his jeep for an hour or so to see how matters are progressing. Thoughtful of him, what?

I have had no interview yet. I hope everything will go right with this. Everything else has petered out to nothing. I'm rather sick of trying to do anything more than is absolutely necessary to get along. It seems that the less you do and the more you mess things up the more you are noticed and consequently the more quickly you are advanced. I'm not doing anything very valuable here now, and won't be doing anything more valuable for quite some time unless something happens soon. I guess I'll have to begin to buy beers for the sergeants, too.

So you are getting the house cleaned & redecorated? Good. I'm hoping I'll be able to slip home sometime & see it. Perhaps things will work out that way yet. I have a feeling they might.

If I don't have the chance to write to all those I wish to during the next few weeks, I hope you will explain. I'll try to catch up later.
It's 10:45 now. I must close.

Love,
Son

TW seems to have the blues and is becoming increasingly impatient with army cronyism. He sounds a lot like my father, who swore that all preferment was arranged by the Masons. He is also hinting that he will be incommunicado because the 350th is about to go on major manoeuvres in Louisiana.

Letter 63, 1943-06-06 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 7

Dear Mother & Dad,

Well, I'm afraid I made a foolish choice. I've had no interview as yet and nevertheless have missed up my furlough. One fellow in another company, while home, returned here after an urgent telegram, and discovered that he has arrived too late. Probably I was still correct in my decision.

I have had my hopes somewhat revived concerning the school program. Your letter helped as did the fact that some have been leaving recently. Perhaps I'll still make the grade. I do hope so.

I imagine my baggage will be on its way soon. There is all sorts of junk therein. Look thru & sort it out, including letters, books, part of an Indian arrowhead, a muffler & like material. Look thru any of it you want.

I understand we may not be allowed to receive packages while on manoeuvres. A foolish decision, if it be so. I'll let you know later about it. Perhaps even my newspaper subscription will have to be discontinued. That doesn't sound plausible. If I find I really need some magazines, like the R. Digest, I'll see if we can't manage to slip them in by sending them in large envelopes. Don't you think that might work?

Be sure to find the watch. I wrapped it in tissue & slipped it inside the muffler. I think I shall send my civilian shoes home also for the time being and then have you mail them when they can be used again.

The boxes of razor blades were excellent. I understand they are difficult to secure when we are in the field and fortunately I have an excellent & plentiful supply on hand. I have plenty of envelopes & stamps now, also. In fact, I've stocked up on all that I need, even managing a heavy glass container for my tooth powder – the card board ones collapsing very readily when carried & crushed in a pack.

Don't worry if you don't hear from me for several days sometime in the near future. I'll probably be too busy to write.

If I run out of reading materials I'll try to manage to have “pocket books” send in my envelope. When & if I need them, I'll let you now.

Say, that garden idea of yours sounds excellent. Are you planting anything beside potatoes
& tomatoes. Maybe I'll be home for good by the time they are ready for eating.

How are your teeth coming along. Do be sure to take care of them & get a set of dentures before too long. You have put it off too long already.

Go through the loose letters I'm returning & take particular care of my Kappa Delta Pi card. I decided not to keep it but I'm glad you sent it so I could see what it was like. I might want it later.

In regard to the set of hist. books. I think I already have them. I think it wouldn't be wise to get them now.

I simply haven't gotten around to taking care of my license. I'll try to do it. It is already for signing but I never think of it at the right time.

Yes, I've sent the cards to the Gallagher boy, but I've never heard from him or from Ed or Jim.

I was sorry to hear about Mrs. Butler's death. Tell Mr. Butler how sorry I was to hear about it.

I had a nice letter from Aunt Grace today. Read it when it comes in the suitcase.

I have innumerable letters to write tonight but yours is the only one I am going to do. The others I'm putting off to another time—again.

Love,
Son

Letter 64, 1943-06-12

June 12, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

The division is now on its way to manoeuvers in Louisiana. All our worldly possessions have been stuffed & stomped into barracks bags or have been strapped to our sagging bodies – the sign that we are on the move. We left camp this morning about nine and raced out of the camp area for a distance of about ten miles where we are bivouacking for the day and probably the night. Why the short haul I can't understand. We could be well on our way by now, but the General has decided otherwise.

Most of the troops are moving by train but the special units and heavy weapons companies are travelling by jeep and truck. I think I could have gone by train as an aid man, but I preferred to go by road and see as much of the country & scenery as possible.

Morning – I'm sitting in the truck waiting to start for Louisiana. We are heading toward Boyce, La. Our mail will be addressed to Shreveport, but we will be about 150 miles south of there to begin with. That is about all the knowledge we have at present.

To be
Continued
Dear Mother & Dad,

Stopped here while on way to town for a good meal. Will write as soon as possible.

Love,
Son

Letter 66, 1943-06-16 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 7

United States Army

June 16, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Well, here we are in the land of manoeuver – and of ticks, chiggers, heat, snakes, negroes, and pine trees. The division is not located at all near Shreveport, but is south east of there near Boyce on the Red River. The nearest town of any size is Alexandria – if you are interested in finding us on a map.

I started to write on notebook paper but managed to finish only the one sheet I am enclosing. I know you want to hear about the trip, so I'll try to tell you about a few of our experiences. Naturally I can't give you all the details or indulge everything I would like, but I'll make an attempt to give you the feeling of the journey.

We left our bivouac area in the camp reservation at seven Sunday morning and travelled until about four in the afternoon. Only two kitchens were feeding all the units that were travelling with the entire battalion and consequently we ate very little. Breaks of ten minutes were permitted on every odd hour, but we managed others until a lieutenant (a West Pointer) decided that wasn’t permissible. Some tried to slip off into roadside stands and get a bite, a few succeeded in their attempts, and the rest of us went hungry. I had some candy bars secreted in my pack & so managed to get along fairly well.

One of the main difficulties with this army is that the officers want to make sure that everything looks right whether or not everything is right. The lieutenants want to please the captains, the captains the majors, the majors the colonels, the colonels the generals, and so on through the echelon. Everyone covers or tries to cover up his mistakes so he won’t lose face, rather than admit he is wrong & try to remedy the situation. We sit up straight when we think the general is near so he will think everything is fine, even though we are dead tired. We are not supposed to be humans & behave as humans ordinarily would. We are putting on a show for the onlookers, the onlooker usually being a superior officer. It really is too bad they don’t realize what is going on & clear up the difficulty.

The first night we slept in Oklahoma near Antlers, quite near the Texas border. It was the same old Oklahoma we had been used to – rolling country, run down villages and scattered, decrepit, unpainted homes. South of McAlester, however, we did pass through a region that
was interesting because of its geologic formations. I read of an area in that section called the Arbuckle Hills & I believe these were those hills. The layers of rock that usually lie horizontal have been tilted so they are standing on end. Where weak spots appear they have been worn down & they look something like this against the sky.

[TW draws a squiggly line above a straight line to illustrate.]

As we neared Texas we came to larger & larger farms that gradually developed into ranches of a small scale. That first night we tented down in great, flat fields that were part of a section of an Oklahoma ranch.

On Monday morning, shortly after crossing the Red River, we came to the great rolling corn fields and cotton fields that stretched as far as the eye could see. Those who came from Texas said they were very small in comparison to those in other areas of the state, but they seemed enormously extensive to me.

In Texas I also say my first oil fields. There is nothing at all to see. The derrick frames look exactly like those pictured and that’s all there is. You see no oil – I presume it is pumped off to nearby storage tanks. Only one well did I see in the process of being drilled and the process I saw consisted merely of two men wearing steel helmets sitting at the foot of the framework while the drill pounded up and down. No excitement – nothing.

Time out for a break – the heat is terrific. It must be well above a hundred and getting hotter. There has been a breeze blowing, but in the open one is not even cognizant of it. However, in the shade one can be fairly comfortable if one does not even move. I can see I’m going to enjoy it here.

Yesterday we left Texas after having stayed all night in Marshall. A good many of us got into town for a good meal, and you can be sure I ate plenty. I sent you a card from there, hoping it would give you some idea of where I had disappeared. Perhaps the card will reach you before this letter does.

Louisiana had a great change of scenery from that Oklahoma or Texas. There are enormous pine forests here, many of which, for thousands and thousands of acres, have been completely cut over. We rode for miles past areas that once were thriving forests and now are grazing lands covered with stumps about twelve inches high. I thought the government’s conservation plan prevented such ruthless cutting, but apparently it doesn’t apply here for the slashing is still being continued.

We are really in the deep south. The conditions under which the negroes live are terrible. Small unpainted shacks line the highway & families of incredible size stood outside & waved as we passed by. Most of them are bare footed, but that apparently doesn’t bother them. They walk anywhere & everywhere, under all conditions.

Sideline – Capt. Stratman just walked across the field with an uncovered thermometer in his hand and it recorded 105 degrees. And the heat is only beginning.

Look at the card I sent Grandma & Ed & note the moss that is hanging from the trees. We see some of that about here & I know there will be plenty more when we begin to manoeuver in a couple of weeks. It looks mighty strange, those masses of moss shaped like grape clusters.

I am now working in the Battalion Aid Station rather than as an aid man with one of the companies I think I shall enjoy this work much more than I did the other even though at times I shall have to substitute as a litter bearer.

In regard to packages, I still have no information. Probably we will be unable to receive them. However, there are some items I might like if we can get them. How about Nestle’s
chocolate for making cocoa with water? Can you buy plenty of it? If so, when & if I can receive some, mix a little sugar with it & mail it off. I don't believe we will be getting to town often & that would offer a good food substitute.

A new name for Louisianna –Lousy Anna. And a good name too.
The mail is going out, Will write later

Love,
Son

TW's complaints about bureaucratic officer behavior sound very credible. And he's right to see that such slavish allegiance to appearances leads to habits of lying.

**Letter 67, 1943-06-17** (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 7

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United States Army
Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

June 17, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Sorry to cut my last letter so short, but I wanted to be sure to get your letter off while I could. I can't figure out the mail schedule yet so when this will get off I can't say. Of course, I have received no mail since last Friday.

I'm writing this while caring for a fellow who has been overcome by heat exhaustion. The temperature is terrifically high here now, but when I took his temperature a few minutes ago I found it to be only 98°, or below normal. It doesn't sound plausible, but that's how the heat is effecting some of us.

I started to tell you in my last letter that I am no longer working as a company aid man. I have been transferred to work in the Battalion Aid Station. Rather than working with the men of a company when they are injured or sick in the field, I help care for them when they are brought in or walk in from the field. If we can't give them sufficient care, they are evacuated further back to the collecting company and so on and on back 'til they reach a permanent hospital. I can learn a great deal more here, for I work with the captain and sergeants etc. who have had more experience.

Let's forget about O.C.S. for a while. I'll tell you about it sometime.

The farmers around here let their pigs run wild in the woods to ferret out their own living. Wherever you happen to be in the woods you are likely to meet up with a group of four or five hogs rooting around for food. I've seen a good many nosing about our bivouac area, hoping to get food from the field kitchens.

One group caught an armadillo & penned it up for a while. I never realized we had them wild in this country.

I think package are out but we have a P.X. in the field from which I can purchase supplies.

Love,
Son

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86
United States Army

June 19, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Your letters (incl. the one cont. ten dollars) and the package addressed to Gruber arrived here. I discovered that the cake had become moldy—after I had eaten the cake, so I think it would be wise to avoid sending food of that kind from now on. Everything is exposed to the boiling heat and consequently it is very difficult to keep cake etc. in good condition. The candy & fruit juices were fine, as were the magazines.

If you do send packages make them quite small, for if I have to move I have to carry anything with me. Will you have dad get a few fish hooks & short length of fish line. I'll cut the pole myself.

I'm getting much better meals now than I ever had at camp. We are eating with Headquarters Company of the third battalion, and inasmuch as the majors and other officers also mess there, they are very well supplied.

The temperature is terrible—hot days and fairly cool nights – but hot, hot days. You know how I react to such heat. I'm taking it a little better by making use of salt tablets. I don't know how long I'll be able to take continued temp. of 105° and up, but everyone seems to be taking it pretty hard. At least I'll have medical assistance handy if anything does happen.

I'm planning to go to the movies this evening. They are brought right here into the field & are shown in the open air, I believe.

I'm planning to mail back the letters I receive so I won't find it necessary to carry them with me. Don't be surprised if you receive envelopes carrying nothing but letters I have received.

I'm acting as clerk in the Aid Station while one of the sergeants is absent in the hospital. It's good experience and I'm learning a great deal about the records.

Love,
Son

Letter 69, 1943-06-20 (back to Table of Contents)

United States Army

June 20, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

We have had it easy for the last two days, over the weekend, but even sitting about doing little or nothing we were covered with perspiration. It's now 6 o'clock in the evening and I'm still sweating so that I'm using a magazine to rest my hand on so the paper won't become wet.

We went swimming this afternoon, & because the lake was a good many miles from our bivouac area, we were transported by truck. The water here is so highly heated by the boiling
sun that it was just like swimming in very warm bath water. Incidentally, we went intending to swim in our birthday suits but when we arrived we discovered that some civilians had taken over. The next best thing was to use our underwear, and that we did. I've begun to feel that it might be wise to have my own swimming trunks handy for just such an emergency. Will you please try to locate my khaki colored trunks the cloth ones and include them in the package you are to send?

Will you tell dad to make those fish hooks fairly strong ones. He might include a cork & sinkers. Not much now, mind you, for I can't carry much more & still be able to stand erect during the rest of my life. I think I'm carrying more than anyone else now, what with books, & towels & toilet articles.

Please see about changing my address for the News Times. It will straighten out the mail in Camp Gruber, & help it get here much sooner.

Remember me to all.

Love,
Son

United States Army
Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

June 24, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

I received your letter today telling that Martha had received a letter and you had not. Please don't let that bother you (I know it didn't really) for I had started her letter in Camp Gruber & just put the finishing touches on here. I couldn't finish yours that day so mailed it the next. I know that you have received it long ago by now.

Well, I'm a corporal now. However, since it has not yet been officially announced I can't include it as part of my address. I'm not exactly a corporal, but am instead a Technician 5th grade, which is, for all practical purposes a technical corporal.

I'm working in the aid station now, and the sergeant said I'll be staying there for good. Today I have been C.Q. (Charge of Quarters) today & so am in charge of the aid station tonight. I've certainly kept busy today, taking temperatures, passing out pills, keeping records (I'm acting as clerk all the time now), cutting blisters, etc. The number of patients increases surprisingly in the field, probably because we are more available than when in camp. There are a good many chigger bite cases, athletes foot, poison ivy & oak, etc.

Its nice to receive individual letters from you, dad. It sounds as if the garden is keeping you busy. Maybe I'll be getting home to have some of those vegetables before they are all used up. By the way, is mother taking care of her teeth? Better see that she does.

We had a hard rain storm last night & our tent almost washed away. It had been ditched but apparently not deep enough to carry off the enormous amount that fed in just a few minutes. We slept on litters (the one luxury the medics can afford) & manage to keep comparatively
Dear Mother & Dad,

It has been several days since I have had time to write, for we have been extremely busy at the aid station. Some kind of poisoning or perhaps dysentery or diarrhea (gastric enteritis as the captain diagnosed it) attacked several of the companies, and we have had patients lined up in rows on litters all about the station. It reminded me of the scene in “Gone With the Wind” in which the wounded soldiers were lined up in the railroad station waiting for medical attention. We evacuated many of them back to the collecting station, but we took care of a good many more because the ambulances were not available. It began the night I was C.Q. & kept me up to mid-night, continuing the next morning. Some temperatures were up to 104+ & these symptoms were accompanied by exceptionally liquid diarrhea. The poor fellows felt miserable. It's easy to see how anything of that type can disrupt the entire program of the army. One fellow's temperature rose so rapidly that he had chills. I covered him with innumerable blankets and still he shook & chattered. Finally he became delirious for a short time but came out of it when we brought his fever down. We moved out of our bivouac area yesterday to a new location about a mile away & had to evacuate all the patients with us. Another fellow & I stayed behind with the sick & then we shuttled them back to our station & to the 313th Medical Battalion by means of jeeps and ambulances we contacted. I'm beginning to feel like a real medical attendant.

My travelling library is in good use today. The magazines & books are distributed all over the area with everyone reading them but me.

I have just finished digging a slit trench 3 feet deep & six feet long, (so it can be filled in when the general has no better plans for us). Louisiana soil has very few rock but the clay sub soil has to be broken with picks. My hands are dam blistery & sore, but I don’t mind so much since it is the best one I have dug since I have been in the army. My greatest regret is that I shall have to fill it in & probably dig hundreds of others like it within the next few months.

If I manage a three day pass while in this area I'm hoping to get to New Orleans. It is quite a distance but I think I can make it.

Love,
Son
We start maneuvering tonight so I have no idea when I can get another letter off to you.

I'm enjoying myself (as well as can be expected) here at the aid station. Capt. Stratman, our battalion surgeon, has one of the best personalities in the regiment, and with him as a leader everything goes fine. He doesn't mind doing as much as he can for all who come for help (which is more than most of the doctors in the army do) and consequently is highly respected. I'm learning a great deal by watching his treatment & trying to remember what it is. I'm planning to hang up my sign as a quack doctor when I return and see how many unsuspecting citizens I can entice into my office. I shouldn't kill more than seven out of ten.

If you can find a good, full size flashlight I could make good use of it. Perhaps the things I asked you to send aren't in the mail yet and you can send it to me with them. Don't make a special package just for that.

Fortunately I have been feeling fine with all the illness around us. The medics seem to be able to care for themselves.

Love,
Son

Letter 72, 1943-06-30 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 7

Camp Polk, Louisiana

June 30, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

No, I'm not at Camp Polk. But this is the only writing paper available. All the rest of my equipment is in my barracks bag somewhere in Louisiana. We took our packs with us on our problem the beginning of this week and have not seen them since. I believe they are coming to where we are bivouacked now.

I have received several letters in the past few days, so our mail is coming through quite regularly. The package of Nestles arrived in the letter and I have discussed that it mixes very well in cold water. I haven't received the package you sent containing the fish hooks, so I can't say anything about the chocolate you sent in the box. I think, however, that a full box would be good. I can spoon out the correct amount when ever I want to use it. Those boxes of food will come in mighty handy now, for we have little opportunity to get to town.

The hike we had on Monday was terrific. The heat was bad and, since a good many had diarrhea, a great many fell out. Captain Stratman and I, because I am acting as clerk & was carrying the blotter or log book with me, stopped with each casualty & soon were miles behind the main body of troops. We finally managed to catch up with the battalion but only by sacrificing our breaks. In the afternoon a terrific storm accompanied by thunder & lightning caught us out in the open & we just stood there, letting the water soak in & cool us off, not even attempting to put on our rain coats. It was fine until we began to get chilly & had to hike on through water & mud up to our shoe tops. It was worse at night, for our jeeps were held up & our packs did not arrive & we had to sleep on the wet ground in our wet clothes. When the jeeps and the food finally arrived (about 1:30 in the morning) we rolled up on blankets on
Dear Mother & Dad,

Today is the first time in Louisiana that our battalion has contacted the “enemy”. We marched for several hours last night & ate at four this morning. Since that time, and it is now one in the afternoon, the aid station group has been behind the lines with the battalion C.P. (Command Post) waiting for the road to be cleared of artillery fire so we can reach the front with our equipment. The captain is already there with two other men, having gone forward with the foot troops; but we can’t get through. We are just sitting and waiting in the shade of the scattered great, tall pines trees of the region.

Gen. Sloan, the commander of the 88th Division, is one of the most thoroughly disliked men I have ever seen. The men of the division have no respect whatsoever for him, probably because he can be so nasty & so thoroughly thoughtless and unreasonable in his orders. Rather

July, 1943

Letter 73, 1943-07-01 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 8

Camp Polk, Louisiana

July 1, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Today is the first time in Louisiana that our battalion has contacted the “enemy”. We marched for several hours last night & ate at four this morning. Since that time, and it is now one in the afternoon, the aid station group has been behind the lines with the battalion C.P. (Command Post) waiting for the road to be cleared of artillery fire so we can reach the front with our equipment. The captain is already there with two other men, having gone forward with the foot troops; but we can’t get through. We are just sitting and waiting in the shade of the scattered great, tall pines trees of the region.

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litters & fell asleep.

A large group of casualties were stranded with an aid man along the line of march and only caught up with us today (Wednesday). Apparently they made out O.K. for they seemed to be in good condition. The ambulances never contacted them and consequently they could not get back. The captain and I had to go to the major last evening and try to account for the missing men. They finally began to worry about them when an airplane spotted them wandering about in the woods I’m afraid the ambulances were not trying very hard to locate where they were.

It is decently cool in the shade today, the first time since we came here.

Will you have Mr. Sillars change the address on the church bulletin he sends me? How about the newspaper? It still is addressed to Gruber. Probably I haven’t received the issue on which the address was changed.

There still has been no announcement of my promotion.

I have no idea what we will be doing after manoeuvres. There are always so many rumors running wild in the army that soon, though you still listen to all of them, you only believe those that sound the best for your own personal interests. Here are a few we have heard recently—we are going to Florida for amphibious training, we are going to the Carolinas. We are going to California for desert training we are going to Massachusetts to guard the coast, etc. No one knows what is going to happen. The Massachusetts story has my money on it at the present time.

That certainly was wonderful news about Martha. I think she will do a good job in first grade work, for she can handle them better than older children. I’m glad she made the grade.

That’s all for now.

Love,

Son

July, 1943

Letter 73, 1943-07-01 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 8

Camp Polk, Louisiana

July 1, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Today is the first time in Louisiana that our battalion has contacted the “enemy”. We marched for several hours last night & ate at four this morning. Since that time, and it is now one in the afternoon, the aid station group has been behind the lines with the battalion C.P. (Command Post) waiting for the road to be cleared of artillery fire so we can reach the front with our equipment. The captain is already there with two other men, having gone forward with the foot troops; but we can’t get through. We are just sitting and waiting in the shade of the scattered great, tall pines trees of the region.

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than worry about the kind of useful training the men are getting he worries himself (and us) sick about such details as whether or not we have gloves on, whether or not all the buttons of our overcoats are buttoned etc. We can’t roll up our selves [sleeves?] or take our shirts off outside our tents at any time, even to work. He raises a stink about having officers saluted at all times, and if someone accidentally fails to salute his car as it passes by, he will stop & publicly bawl the man out for showing such disrespect. All surely signs of a great mind! An incident occurred just a short time ago that brought forth all the vitriolic language. A civilian had been along the road selling ice cream, and two fellows naturally bought some to try to fill their empty stomachs. The general (Snuffy Smith, or simply Snuffy as he is called) came snooping about (riding, of course) and discovered the empty boxes. These boxes were very important to the progress of the battle of course, inasmuch as the road was already blocked by artillery fire & everyone was trying desperately to open it for travel. And so the general overlooked them? Certainly not. He proceeded to insult the men for being lazy etc., etc, etc. and then looked up the ice cream salesman and told him off. If we should accidentally lose the war you can easily see why.

The hike last evening was quite something. Very long & tiring, but the first part very unusual. It was pitch black, naturally, and we were travelling through a dense forested area. The exciting part was trying to follow the person ahead of you over logs, around trees, through mud, stumbling over ditches & rocks, pushing away vines. I had hiked at night before, a good many times, but never through such thickly wooded land. Our group became separated from the rest & surprisingly enough discovered later that instead of being at the end of the column, as we were originally, we were ahead of it.

We will be down here for two months at least. You certainly won’t see me before then.

I have stamps but I’m sending these letters free because I can’t get in touch with my barracks bag where they are located. You’ll be getting some air mail letters before too long.

Love,

Son
Today really is a pip. The rifle companies are out in the boiling sun where there is no protection from the heat at all—digging fox holes. I don’t see how they stand it. Several are being carried in & sent back to the collecting company. We are situated in a swampy area, but at least it is partially in the shade. The aid station stays behind with the C.P. & so we are where the shade is.

The detachment was left behind last evening while caring for some artificial casualties & so set off on last night’s problem by itself. We were at least a half an hour behind the main body of troops & had very little idea of the route they were following, but we did know where we were heading. We set off cross country by compass, following an aerial map of the region. When we reached our destination only the C.P. was there, the other troops and motor convoy not having arrived as yet. We were there hours before some of them reached there, simply because we had a good leader & used our heads.

Two packages arrived the other day in good condition – the food & my bathing trunks. Unfortunately they came when I was in the field so I am carrying them about with me.

I simply don’t feel like writing any more. It’s too hot.

Love,
Son

Letter 75, 1943-06-05 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 8

Camp Polk, Louisiana

Truman A. Warner, Jr.
Truman A. Warner, Jr.

July 5, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

The above signatures were simply done last night because some of the fellows, having seen me use manuscript writing in writing many of my letters, wondered if I could write cursively and when I demonstrated that I could, they wanted to see which was faster. They don’t know yet.

It was officially announced last evening by the captain that three of us in our battalion aid station had been made technicians fifth grade (T/5), though we all knew it before.

We have no idea how long we will be here. Probably when they see what a foul division we are we will be sent back to camp to train all over again. Poor, poor Gen. Sloan. He either has an inferiority complex or superiority complex. Can you imagine a general stopping a major and inspecting his personal belongings, making him taking them from the trailer of his jeep. When he discovered another officer’s equipment that the major was transporting, he made him leave that extra equipment beside the road until a jeep of the second officer’s organization should come by & pick it up. The poor general. Honestly, he must have so little ability that he is trying to cover that up by making a fuss over little, unimportant details, thus trying to appear important. So many fail to see that appearing important & being important are two entirely different things.
Any time you want to send comparatively small food packages, don’t be afraid to do so. Send things that won’t easily spoil – incl. raisins, nuts, etc. However, don’t think you need to worry about my eating. An added thought – some fruit flavoring to add to water or anything of the like to make drinks with water would be excellent.

The magazines are excellent—the main trouble being that I want to file them & have difficulty in getting them home. I haven’t been to town since I reached here & probably won’t for quite some time. I haven’t seen my barracks bag with most of my equipment in it for over a week. Everyone, including officer, don’t like the situation for they want some clean clothes & an opportunity to rest up a bit.

After dark the captain & the sergeant & I usually make a trip in the jeep to the regimental aid station to turn in the daily sick report. It’s there that we get all the rumors & facts about what has been happening.

July 6, 1943

We had a hot, fast hike yesterday, but I made it without any difficulty—I rode in jeep. The captain has us take turns so we have it a little easier. However, a great many are falling out and we have to see they are taken care of. The leaders have been lax in getting water for the men & consequently much of our difficulty is due to that cause along with enormously big & infected chiggers, blisters, dysentery, heat exhaustion & sun stroke, poison ivy & oak etc.

If the flashlight is difficult to find, take your time and perhaps you can find one that looks like this [drawing of curved end flashlight] – a crook at the end containing the lens, glass, etc. Also if you can find any red cellophane to make a blackout flashlight out of it, it would be good.

Dry coconut also might be good to include in a package.

We are having such a hot time because we are maneuvering in a area, previously forested, now completely cut over. The only shade available is under the trees lining the small streams that cut across the fields. The rest of the region & hundreds of yards back from the roads consists of grass lands bespeckled with burnt tree trunks, and here and there a spindly pine silhouetted against the horizon.

[drawing of trees and cleared ground]

And this kind of country goes on for miles.

Love,
Son

Letter 76, 1943-07-10 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 8

July 10, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

I honestly haven’t had time to write during the last few days. Yesterday we had the day off & I spent my time cleaning my clothes & myself. Today I’m hoping to get to town, but since it (Natchitoches) is a good many miles away. I’m not sure I’ll make it. Ulman (yes, he’s still here
but in another battalion) and I were planning to get away early, but no one has come back to
take his place at the Aid Station. We won't be leaving until twelve at least.
   I'll see about getting my license application signed today if I can remember it.
   I have received the two packages in excellent condition. The cookies in the last one came
just in the nick of time. We hadn't eaten in about twenty hours and so you can be sure they
didn't last long.
   I've just taken care of my license. You had better send it too [sic] me personally, if possible,
rather than trust any sudden changes of address to the Motor Vehicle Department.
   I heard from Ralph recently where he is located in Virginia. He is in charge of the A.S.T.P.
[Army Specialized Training Program] plan in his region & has offered to get me as much
information as I need. He is sure that I am qualified & so I am going to look into it again.
   Our bivouac areas are located in such out of the way places that I'm afraid it will be
impossible to get off to New Orleans. It takes hours to get to the nearest towns, if one can
even manage to get there.
   I know this is very brief but I want to get away as early as possible. Will write soon again.
   Love,
   Son

P.S. I even had to take off the adhesive to write this. I did receive an invitation to Barbara's
wedding so please do include my name on the gift card.

July 11, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

   I have just come back to our bivouac area from a most enjoyable weekend. Seth and I
started out yesterday, heading toward Natchitoches, the only town of any size nearby. We had
no idea of what transportation we would find, but just by luck we met an artillery truck headed
for that town & were carried in directly to the city—very excellent except for the suffocating
dust.

   Natchitoches is a small city and consequently was overrun with soldiers. Most of them were
sorely disappointed because of the lack of facilities, but we made the most of the situation and
found the city to be most delightful. It was founded by St. Denis as a French trading post and
still retains much of the old French flavor. I questioned some of the natives & discovered some
interesting spots to visit and you can be sure I saw as much as possible. The old wrought iron
grill work, circular stair cases, wooden coverings of the sidewalks (really balconies with grill
work in front), old plantation homes, creeping myrtle trees, great magnolias—I wandered and
gazed and took in as much as possible.

   The town was once located on the Red River and once was a flourishing river town on
the route to New Orleans. However, that section of the river changed its course and the old
channel has now become Cane River Lake. The old wharves, of course, are now gone, but
some of the beautiful old homes remain. The main street runs parallel to the street [river?]. A
typical River front town.
Because of the crowded conditions we were unable to get a hotel room. We finally got a
touch of that much lauded & highly overrated southern hospitality, and found it to be won-
derful. We stopped at a house displaying “ROOMS” in big letters, but learned, to our disap-
pointment, that all available space was occupied. However of their own free will, they offered
us comforters, to use to sleep on the porch. Later, when they decided to visit relatives in the
country, they let us use their own room. Also, knowing that it was practically impossible to eat
in the restaurants, they made orange juice and bacon, lettuce, tomato & egg sandwiches for us.
In the morning they wouldn’t let us leave before they cooked breakfast – bacon, eggs, home
made biscuits (hot), coffee, & jelly. And all this was for nothing. That is especially remarkable
when realizing that many won’t even give the fellows a drink of water.

Our break of three days is almost over and soon we will be on the move again. I’ve decided
to open my second medical pouch & carry some extra supplies in it – if I can manage to slip it
in the jeep. I’m even putting in writing paper & magazine & I hope some extra clothes – that
is underwear & socks.

More later again. You hear from me as often as I can find time to write.

Love,
Son

Letter 78, undated (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 8

Dear Mother,

I found this handkerchief in at [sic] store in Natchitoches (pronounced Nakatosh) located
in an old French building there. It is not at all typical of the south, but so far I haven’t been
able to find just what I wanted in that respect. However, this particular handkerchief took my
fancy & knowing how much you enjoy things of this sort I immediately thought of sending it
to you. I hope you will enjoy it.

Love,
Son

Letter 79, 1943-07-16 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 8

July 16, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Another break and thus another chance to write. Our bivouac areas always are located so
far fro towns that it is practically impossible to get away, and so I am trying to rest, read and
write. However, all morning I’ve been busy, racing about from place to place – the medical
battalion, regimental, area, etc. Now I’m going to write, no matter what.

The flashlights are excellent, really excellent. They give a fine light and I have discovered
that I can fix the lens for black out purposes by using red chewing gum wrappers. Forget the
other light I asked about. It isn’t necessary to send it now.

Don’t think that I mind having food come to me while we are maneuvering. Sometimes it’s the only thing between me and starvation. Now that I’m with the Aid Station group I usually can find some space in the jeep to tuck my package in.

Do you think it is necessary to insure the packages of food? I really don’t think it is. They come through in good condition and the insurance really costs a good deal. Just send the packages themselves.

The latest rumor about our location after manoeuvres is that we are to be sent to Camp Robinson, Arkansas, near Little Rock. As for the veracity of this, you have just as good a chance of knowing as I.

No, I don’t need any money. I really have more on my person now than is safe to carry. I don’t spend much, for there isn’t much I need to spend it for, and when in town I can have a wonderful time on just a few dollars while a good many need to spend thirty or forty dollars (most of it on liquor) in order to feel that they are enjoying themselves. My enjoyment is mostly sightseeing, and that certainly doesn’t cost much. Beginning this month I also will be getting $66.00 rather than the $54 I’ve been receiving as a P.F.C., and that will be all the more going into my wallet.

I probably will be one of the first ones getting a furlough when manoeuvres are over in a few more weeks. I hope I won’t be disappointed again. I have a good many menus already planned, so you can expect me to eat well when I arrive.

I’ve almost made up my mind to go right to school when the war is over rather than go immediately back to teaching. It would be much easier than spending the summer months for years trying to do the same thing. Of course, my final decision will rest with the job situation in the country when I’m released. It may be wiser to grab the job I know is waiting for me. Rather than send me the extra money you think I should have, put it aside and keep it for that purpose.

I was sorry to learn about your arm, dad. I imagine, however, that by the time you receive this, it will be as good as new.

I started to tell you about O.C.S. once, but had to cut my letter short. My application was refused by the board because I hadn’t enough experience with administrative forms. However, they very nicely added that they considered my other qualifications to be excellent and asked me to reapply after manoeuvres when I had had the opportunity to read the field manuals pertaining to that phase of the work. I may do that, but I still prefer to go to school. I’m beginning to look into that again also. Ulman was accepted for O.C.S., but nevertheless is also right here in Louisiana. If I do go, I’ll be glad to have had the experience.

You ask me all sorts of questions that I fully intend to answer in my next letter, and then, by the time I get around to writing, I forget what I was planning to say. I hope I don’t leave too much unanswered.

I simply can’t find the time to write all that I want I know everyone doesn’t realize that & probably thinks I don’t want to write. I guess there’s not much I can do about that.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

This is really the first chance I have had to write since I wrote my last letter. The last problem was terrifically hard & hot & long and we had an enormous number of casualties. The heat was terrible, hiking across miles of cut over country with the shade trees scattered individually hundreds of feet apart, we had between a hundred and a hundred and fifty or more fall out, because of the heat and, as a result, in taking care of them, we were miles behind the main body of troops. I rode part of the time and consequently made out better than many. The ambulances were so busy that many, after waiting for hours for the ambulances to come by & pick them up, walked back to the troops & then fell out again from exhaustion the next day. Those who walked the entire distance travelled over 30 miles during that one day. (More about this later)

I received the various packages including the one with the fish hooks. I don't have any time for fishing even though I originally thought I would. Don't send any more magazines for a while for I have plenty of reading material on hand & have difficulty in storing the rest. Also received the auto license, cellophane and $10 (which I didn't need). Everything came in fine condition.

I heard from Ralph, Phyliss, Terry, Miss Tobias, Mary Anita, & Miss Todd recently. It does seem good to hear from them. Ralph suggests that I might reapply for the A.S.T.P. again if I can't learn anything otherwise.

Some of the fellows bought what were supposed to be chicken salad sandwiches but apparently they weren't—at least good ones. We've had a great many evacuated to the hospital with diarrhea, cramps, etc. Probably they were filled with germs – my, my, I've been careful not to eat anything like that myself for fear that would happen.

Watermelon is very plentiful in this region but difficult to obtain if you don't want to steal it. Some high ranking officer probably doesn't like it so we aren't supposed to buy it. However, once in a while we manage to get it, on the sly. Recently Snuffy (Gen. Sloan) caught some fellows eating mellon & took them to the colonel of the regiment they were in—and he found the colonel eating watermelon.

I was almost captured during the last problem but managed to get away. All of us in the jeep were actually captured, but the umpires gave us 2 minutes, to escape because something was incorrect with the attack. We left and got away, very fortunately, because I had all the medical records with me.

I would like to write more but I don't have time – more later.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

We've been keeping ourselves on the move again the past few days, maneuvering through sections of Kisatchie National Forest. It still is extremely hot, but this region has not been so thoroughly cut over and so shade is a little more plentiful. The scenery is much nicer than other areas, also, having gentle rolling hills & sandstone bluffs exposed and being generously covered with pine trees, long leaf pines with great, hard cones. I've been thinking of sending one home for you to see but I'm afraid that would be rather difficult. The soil is very sandy, ideal for pine.

I was in a tank yesterday for the first time. Three of us had fallen behind the main body of troops with the lame, the halt, and the blind and so were hiking along the road by ourselves. (One of the advantages of being a medic is that now one worries much where you are when you disappear. They believe you to be with someone who is ill.) We were taking our time because the sun was so hot when we passed near a light tank hidden in the woods. The crew was eating watermelon and invited us to join them. Naturally, we did. The fellows were very thoughtful about explaining the tank & its operation to us and finally asked us to get in if cared to. I changed my mind then and there about enjoying life in an armored division. The heat was intense, even though the engine had not been running for an hour or more and the tank itself was in the shade. It is extremely small inside, having just enough room for four men, if they fold themselves up well, and their equipment. Surprisingly enough the interior is painted white, to give the illusion of space I presume, but when you try to squeeze in you discover it is mighty small.

Yes, do send some more of the fruit flavoring, for it is very, very good. Just what is needed to give a little variety to plain, ordinary water.

In regard to the soldiers individual pay record you were asking about, just forget it. I believe another one has been made and I have no use for one at home anyway. Just keep it in case I need it.

As I am writing the doctor is performing a minor operation on a fellow just across the tent from me – removing a large wart like protuberance on a fellow's upper arm near the arm pit.

You can see by the blotches that it is raining. I'm under a tent fly but still the drops come blowing in.

Today we are at Hutton, La. This army does more foolish moving than any group I have ever seen. Last night we travelled for miles in trucks, arrived here early in the morning, have eaten & stayed around all day & probably move out tonight a few miles farther along the line. Why we stopped where we did we'll never know. We are supposed to be having a rest period but we move so much during the break that we might just as well keep maneuvering.

I just can't seem to write often, try as I will. I'm kept pretty busy with the records, even when the others are not working.

Will try to write soon again.

Love,
Son
Letter 82, 1943-07-29

July 29, 1943

Danbury, Conn

Hello Son. How are you tonight well I hope. We had a thunder storm tonight and it is raining now. We were over to Gastons about ten minutes tonight. And was over to Grandma too. We have got a package to mail to you in the morning. I hope you will like it. How is the weather down there I hope it is better 10:25 o’clock. Hope we see you soon.

Love, Dad

Letter 83, 1943-07-30

United States Army

July 30, 1943

Dear Mother and Dad,

This has been one of the easiest days I have had since I came to Louisiana. The present problem involves defending a certain position to prevent the enemy from penetrating. Two lines of defense have been dug, the second one being that to which the troops intend to withdrew when they are driven from the foreward line. The aid station has been dug in (fox holes & camouflage) with the battalion C.P. behind the second line waiting for the troops to withdraw, which we know they will have to do. While the men are in the foreward area, a temporary station has been set up, leaving most of us behind doing practically nothing. I've worked on a few reports and company sick books, and that is all.

I've been meaning to ask you this a long time. According to various news items I have seen, a good many drivers have been arrested for gas violations. Are you in any danger of that, driving to Keenan’s to work in the garden?

I certainly was pleased to know you were able to get to New York, but am sorry you had to go for the reason you did. However, I do think you were very wise, dad, to take care of that rupture as soon as possible, for I have too many pitiful cases around here to advise anyone to wait.

The post cards are almost like a daily diary of what has been going on at home. It’s good to know that there usually [is] mail of some kind waiting for you at mail call. I still don’t see how you find time every evening to get a letter off on one of the cards.

The cocoa works very well, even with cold water, and is especially good when we have to wait several hours for a meal. Part of a canteen cup of that is almost a meals in itself. Once in a while we have the chance to buy cookies at a field P.X. and so I try to stock up on them.
packages of fig Newtons, filled cookies etc. I can’t carry many, for unless they are carefully wrapped the ants find their way in.

It is terribly difficult to keep up with the news while we are out here playing cops and robbers, but I have managed to learn a little bit about the excellent progress being made in Italy. It is almost as if we were not at war, we personally can learn so little about it.

Are you still an air raid warden or has someone taken your place? You have spoken of several blackouts. Are you really having a good many of them?

I suppose Martha is really busy now, keeping up with her classes at Yale. Is she living there or commuting? I hope she makes our O.K., for I imagine the work is really tough.

Mable Ives died rather suddenly, didn’t she? I wonder what will happen to all her genealogical records. If you even learn that they are to be disposed of, try to get them for me. It would be a shame to lose track of all the material she has collected.

Have you visited Aunt Em lately. I imagine she would enjoy seeing you if you could manage.

Frank never mentioned before about the Wilcox family coming from Wallingford. Find out if he means that Archibald Wilcox himself came from there and just some of his forefathers. How does he know that came from Wallingford. Did Becky Ann tell him or is that just a guess? Do try to take care of this, for it is important to know. He isn’t just saying that because he knows that Waterbury Wilcox came from that region, is he? If he is sure about what he says, he has given me an important clue.

I really am expecting to get a furlough a few weeks after manoeuvers. I certainly am looking forward to getting home again, even if it is only for a few days.

Love,
Son

August, 1943

Letter 84, 1943-08-01 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 9

United States Army

Aug. 1, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

We are still involved in that same problem I wrote about in my previous letter – doing very little but watching behind in the C.P. Yesterday I did go up near the front lines while casualties were being tagged. That is about all I have seen of the action.

Did I ever tell you that I had some fresh figs which I personally picked off a tree? Perhaps you have seen figs growing, but I never had. The particular trees I saw were about an old, abandoned farm house we passed on a recent problem. I saw fellows plucking small, pear shaped yellowish green fruit, and, curious as I am, inquired what they were. I had never before even considered what figs looked like when growing, and could hardly believe that was what this fruit was. The seeded part inside is red & perhaps is the toughest part – it was difficult to discover.

They are mighty good and much different in taste than when canned or dried. I understand
that they acquire their brown color when they become fully and completely ripe.

Last evening I had some of the major’s birthday cake – associating with the elite you see. I went in to the regimental aid station with the daily casualty report and the major began passing out food he had just received in a box from his wife. That’s all there is to the story. Nothing more personal.

I still have no definite idea of when manoeuvers are to be over or where we will be going when we do leave. I wish we could have some facts for a change rather than those stupid rumors.

Love,
Son

TW’s ire about rumors sounds like a typical GI complaint: rumors abound, especially when they might involve life-threatening future movements. TW doesn’t speak of deployment to the war zone when it’s obvious that they’re training for such a deployment.

Letter 85, 1943-08-03 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 9
[postcard]

Aug. 3

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm visiting the infamous Leesville of Reader's Digest fame, and while there is a post office available will send you the enclosed money order. I had almost two hundred dollars on my person and felt that was altogether too much, Probably will send more later. You can be sure I still have enough for a furlough, which of course won't be for a few weeks yet.

Love,
Son

Letter 86, 1943-08-22 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 9
[postcard from Dad]

Aug. 22nd 1943

Hello Son How is everything tonight fine I hope We was over at Grandma for dinner. Then we went up to the farm. We brought home a basket of tomatoes and a basket of apples for jelly and some squash. Ed dug some potatoes and they are good we had some for dinner. How is the weather there now better I hope It is 1030 oclock Hope we see you soon. Love Dad
**Letter 87, 1943-08-16** (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 9
[postcard]

Aug 16th 1943  
Danbury Conn

Hello Son. How is everything tonight fine I hope We got your letter today. Glad you can have some time off now and then. We have got a package all ready to send in the morning We are ll well here. It is 1046 oclock think I will go to bed. Hope we see you soon.

Love, Dad

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**Letter 88, 1943-08-06** (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 9
[postcard]

Aug. 6, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,  

Received your last package (cookies, cheese, potatoe sticks, jam etc.) yesterday & have just opened it after persuasion from everyone handy. All want me to tell you how excellent the cookies are & suggest that the lifting of sugar rationing might encourage such packages coming even more often. I am saving the cheese, crackers and the like until a later time.  

Still no word as to when manoeuvers are to be over. Soon I hope. As to where we are going, of course I couldn't tell you ahead of time anyhow. The latest rumors include Texas and Oregon. There is a possibility of being sent anywhere.

Love,  
Son

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**Letter 89, 1943-08-02** (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 9  
[photograph of TW used as a postcard]

I really don’t believe that manoeuvers have made me look quite this bad. It must be the camera. At least I hope so.  
Leesville, La.

Aug., 2, 1943

(Price 25¢ - that might explain it)
Dear Mother and Dad,

Yesterday we made a trip – a quick one – into Texas and we now are bivouacked near Newton. The climate is much the same as that of Louisiana, but the atmosphere is much different. By that I mean the people of Texas seem much more interested in taking care for their homes, their roads & road sides, etc. It doesn't seem possible that just crossing an imaginary state line would cause such a change, but the difference really is there. Perhaps it is due to the fact that Texas is a much more prosperous state than Louisiana, and the money the state itself expends in improving itself also influences the interest the people individually take in their surroundings. I remember reading a statement one the early French visitors made about the difference he noticed while travelling from one colony to another. The change was so striking that his statements didn’t appear even plausible. Now I feel he probably was accurate in his observations. You see, manoeuvers are even giving me the opportunity to improve my historical observations & interpretations.

We perhaps may be going to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas when manoeuvers are over. Of course that is only a rumor, but it seems to be quite thoroughly believed. I was rather hoping we would move eastward.

Perhaps you were correct in saying that the A.S.T.P. involved after-the-war service. I have heard that that is the case. However, if I can manage, I still think I may take it, for the opportunities are good and it may offer a lead to a good government job, especially if it involves psychology. What do you think about this? Tell me honestly how you feel. (Incidentally, I probably never will have the chance to choose anyway. I guess they just don't want me.)

I was very fortunate in receiving my T/5 rating when I did. Our new T.O. (Table of Organization) has gone into effect, and we now already have too many non-commissioned officers. No new ones will be made in the near future and there now is practically no chance of any advancement. I guess I'm destined for no higher rank.

The boxes you send really are excellent. I manage to rescue part of the contents for myself so I have some extra rations while on a problem. However, everyone usually gets his hand in before I get away.

While on the last problem, and three of us were separated from the rest in a jeep, one of the quartermaster truck drivers gave us each some of the canned rations the infantry hears about but never sees. The vegetable stew was warmed by keeping it fastened to the exhaust pipe of the truck and it really was very good – potatoes, beef, tomatoes, etc. all mixed and very well seasoned. Enough in one container for filling the mess kit. The other can held crackers, hard candies, instant mix coffee and sugar for the coffee. I really was full, using just those two small cans.

Captain Stratman is in an unusually gay mood today. Just a minute ago he was lustily reciting “The Night Before Christmas” as he hung his washing on the branches of a pine tree. It reminded him of trimming a Christmas tree, he said. Earlier he was trying to anesthetize himself with ethyl chloride, normally used as a local anesthetic.
I have asked Ralph for some further information in regard to A.S.T.P. I expect to hear from him shortly and then I'll begin to look into the matter – but do nothing definite 'til I get my furlough. I don't want to lose out again.

I'll want my leather bag when we get stationed, so I will have it for my furlough. They probably will send us off to some other area for further manoeuvres rather than station us. That is just our luck.

Some one sliced one of the pine trees we are bivouacking under to watch the gum flow. They really could get turpentine from those trees. Being inquisitive, I naturally stuck my fingers in and they smelled like dad's paint shed. However, they certainly don't use the turps for paint in this region for most of the houses are completely unpainted, never having seen a coat when first erected. A painter's paradise.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

When I came home from my pass yesterday I found another package waiting for me at the aid station—cookies, apricot juice, punch flavoring, etc.—all very good. I haven’t opened the jam yet but am waiting for a special occasion. As usual, everyone pitched in and helped me eat it.

I went to a very small town called San Augustine on my pass.—pop. 1600. There was practically nothing to do there, but the most attractive part of the visit was that there were only about a half a dozen soldiers in town. Consequently there was no standing in line for food and you could take your choice of meals—not just accept what was left. I had a steak dinner, Fr. fried potatoes, & tomatoes, and ate ice cream, pie, cola, sherbert, cookies, etc. until I had room for nothing more.

In San Augustine I bought a pair of sun glasses, having lost my good polaroids somewhere in Louisiana several weeks ago. I guess it is foolish to try to carry a good pair, for they are so easily mislaid. These have a little green “awning” over the glass. Everyone says they look like frogs eyes or the blinkers they put on horses. I’m afraid they are right. I intend to wear them for a while anyway.

We had a very nice room that cost only a dollar a person. The best part of the entire trip was taking a bath in a bath tub—just lying comfortably in warm water & soaking. The army psychologists have discovered that some of the best initial treatment they can give psychological cases they are evacuating from the war zone is to feed them ice cream & give them a bath in a bath tub. I can see that this might work. It certainly would help me.

We are definitely going to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. I am already planning the sight seeing trips I hope to take. Of course the Alamo is in San Antonio and the Mexican border only a couple of hundred miles away. I even have my eyes on the Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico if I can manage a weekend pass and a three day pass together.

I have tried at all the gas stations to get a good map of Texas and have been unable to do so yet. Evidently no more are being printed. Will you both look in my file of maps and try to find one of my Texas maps there. There were some good ones published during the centennial.

It has been raining hard here today & I am trying to write couped up in a tent. The letter is wet and the tent leaking but I’m managing to get a little bit done.

I told you recently that there was no chance for advancement here. Since then another T.O. has been put forward and now there are a good many openings. Maybe I still have a chance.

I was talking to our personnel clerk yesterday concerning the A.S.T.P. He suggested that I submit an entirely new application for he knows of cases where records are entirely lost. I think I shall do that in a few weeks.

I am to be about the very first to get a furlough—at least that is what Sgt. Schenk says. I hope he is right. Among other things I would like to eat when I get home are—(1) tuna fish salad (2) fresh tomatoes (3) cantelope (4) plenty of oranges, apples and other fruit (5) raw carrots (6) some of dad’s potatoe salad (7) milk—and on and on. Meat etc. I have had plenty of—save those points for yourself. Generous, aren’t I?

When you receive word about sending my leather bag also include the civilian shoes I sent home just before I left Gruber. They are much lighter [?] for traveling.
Dear Mother & Dad,

Here it is Sunday again and I’m back in Louisiana. Fortunately, during the last few days our regiment was in reserve and consequently we spent our days trying to keep cool while sitting about in whatever shade we could find and hiked at night. Not bad.

I understand we have to be out of the manoeuver area by the twenty first, so consequently we are to be here only a few days longer. Of course they can change their plans, but I doubt if they will.

I received the letter you sent saying another package is on the way. I believe that had better be the last for a while, for we will be on the move soon. I can’t remember to tell you how much I enjoyed every particular item in the packages, but I do want to mention the fruit juice flavoring & the pickles. Three of us ate almost the entire bottle one day when I was fortunate enough to be riding in the jeep. We simply pulled them out of the bottle & ate them—not even eating sandwiches with them. The package of candy came today—individually wrapped caramels and parlay's (two boxes). The only card enclosed said, “From a friend of your mothers.” Do thank her for me, won’t you and tell her how much I enjoyed them. In fact, say that the entire battalion aid station enjoyed them, for you can’t open a package here without a horde of hungry vultures surrounding you even before the last string is cut.

We are moving back to Texas tonight and probably won't return to Louisiana again before we leave from Jasper for San Antonio. There are many drawbacks to Fort Sam but all reports say it is one of the nicest camps in the country. It is an old established camp, brick barracks, etc. I presume we are to be in that part.

Several men were killed during the recent problem that involved crossing the Sabine River. One lieutenant was found floating, drowned in the water. I understand he was from the engineers that helped construct the pontoon bridges.

Last evening, about one thirty, I heard Capt. Stratman and one of the fellows talking about someone having been killed. I don’t know what caused me to wake up then, for they had tried to wake me earlier to go with them and I had slept blissfully through all their calling. Naturally I pricked up my ears & learned that on the highway, just a few hundred yards from where we are bivouacked a ¾ ton truck had turned over in a very small body of water, just about large enough to hold the truck. The private, who normally would have been driving was thrown clear, but the lieutenant, driving, was caught beneath the overturned vehicle & drowned before it could be righted.

I believer Jim Gallagher is still in Mississippi, but I haven’t heard from him for a good many
weeks. Ed is in Texas, not too far from San Antonio. Perhaps I'll be able to see him. Jim B. is also in Texas, but several hundred miles from where I shall be.

We are to have a two day break and I am hoping to get some more letters of them. It's time for chow now (this letter having been interrupted innumerable times by people wanting their chigger bites taken care of—I'm CQ [Charge of Quarters] today) and I really must close.

I know I'll be hearing from you soon again.

Love,
Son

Letter 94, undated (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 9

Camp Polk, Louisiana

Aug. 17, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm writing this by candle light near Burkeville, Texas. We have had an excellent break the last few days, bivouacking near a nice cool stream, good for swimming though it is not much more than waist deep. I feel really clean for the first time since maneuvers, going in the brook whenever I feel the urge. The powers that be evidently realize we must be cleaned up to appear respectable for going on to San Antonio.

Well, the unexpected has happened. Snuffy Sloan has convinced someone that we should stay here longer, so that is to be the case. Now we are not leaving until the twenty ninth. Tomorrow it probably will be announced that we are leaving immediately.

Now that we are almost through maneuvers they have decided to change much of our equipment—tents, axes, medical chests, etc., with a few days left. It will take weeks really to straighten it out and they can't wait just a little while longer.

The camp fire is fine tonight. Showers of sparks from the dried pine branches look like Fourth of July sparklers against the shadowy trunks of the pine trees. It always is wonderfully cool at night and the fire is not out of place.

Don't let this worry you at all. I'm not even sure of the facts. I almost went overseas recently. What really happened I do not. I've just heard rumors. Recently on a short hike Sgt. Schenk said that so-and-so was alerted for overseas duty. Capt. Stratman added, just casually, that that made my position alright again. What he meant I had no idea at the time. Later one of the corporals said to me that I was supposed to be going overseas but Horowitz was taking my place. He had overheard someone talking at regiment and listened to catch what was going on. He couldn't get it all straight. Talking to Ulman last night, he said he knew of some others who also were called & it seemed as if they were choosing ones who had previous teaching experience. Why I don't know. They were anxious to get Horowitz out of the outfit & apparently in some way rescued me. I guess I do have some luck left after all.

Don't send me any books or magazines for a while. I have read the August "Readers Digest", using Capt. Stratman's copy. I don't want to keep track of any more just now, for I already have too much to manage.
You asked about Seth going to O.C.S. when he reaches Texas. I do not know. That is up to
the peculiar army and its strange plans. He might never go, but I honestly believe he will be
going soon.

(Morning) The package with the peanut butter etc. came & is practically gone already.
Very good. Very good.
The cards for change of address are going out today, I understand, but I I haven’t seen them
yet. I believe it is to be simply. Fort Sam Houston, Texas. More later.

Love,
Son

Letter 95, 1943-08-19 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 9

Camp Polk, Louisiana
Aug. 19, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

This, the last problem of maneuvers is very interesting, perhaps because the weather last
night & today has become considerably cooler. When I awake during the night I was really
cold & couldn’t warm up until I had drunk a steamy cup of coffee – (I still don’t like it, but at
least it is hot). You feel like doing things when the weather is pleasant.

We are defending the Sabine River, with the C.P. several miles behind the front. However,
the casualties, being along the river, necessitate a long jeep ride to carry them. The roads are
unsatisfactory for ambulances. One of our jeeps has rings for fastening a litter to it & we made
use of that today, strapping the patient securely so he would not roll off. While taking care of
one of the fellows who was supposedly injured while defending one of the river fords, a third
army photographer found us & snapped our picture, noting names, rank, company, home town
etc. You might see me in the newspaper one of these days. Most likely however, they will be
buried in the files in Washington.

Bamboo grows around here, much to my surprise. I saw a branch one of the fellows cut
yesterday. The river also is infested with alligators or crocodiles, I don’t know which—at least
that is the tale.

Have you ever received the fifty dollars I sent home from Leesville? You have never men-
tioned it & I am becoming anxious for fear it was lost en route.

Fifteen furloughs began immediately after maneuvers. I’ll be seeing you soon, I hope.

Love,
Son

Letter 96, 1943-08-22 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 9
Camp Polk, Louisiana

Aug. 22, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Maneuvers are over!
Maneuvers are over!
Maneuvers are over!
“ “ ” (100 times)

Last night, by the racket that was raised, you would have thought that the war itself was over. Shouting, bonfires, blank ammunition—everything. If it had been the real war that was finished, the men just couldn't have been controlled.

I am to be among the very first to receive a furlough and so will be home very shortly. Sergeant Schenk told me this morning that he had seen the list. He, another fellow from New York & I probably will travel together, for we are all heading toward New York City.

Now about the shoes & luggage I asked you to have ready to mail. Probably it would be wiser to wait and I shall bring them back with me. When we first move to a new area the mails are very complicated for several days, and if I should receive my furlough at once I would perhaps be without them anyway. I can buy a small bag at San Antonio & bring my things home in that.

We won't be leaving for San Antonio until the 27th so we won't of course be there until the 30th.

I finally heard from Jim Birtles today. He has been extremely busy & just now found time to write. He thinks perhaps he may be going to San Antonio, also, but is not at all sure. Probably, however he is to be stationed in Santa Anna, Calif. Let's hope it is to be Texas.

I honestly can't remember how much I put down as giving you and dad—probably $50 but I'm not positive what the clerk finally put down. Why don't you put down approx $50-$60 or something like that.

Will write again soon.

Love,
Son

CPL. Truman A. Warner
Med. Det. 350th Infantry

Aug. 22, 1943

This paper just came and I'm including a sheet for you to see. Not so bad, what?

Letter 97, 1943-08-24 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 9
Dear Mother & Dad,

I have just learned that the first furloughs are expected to be issued on September 6th. If we get off a day earlier we may make it home by the 7th. Otherwise it probably will be the 8th. I have no further plans yet. However, if Sgt. Schenck has anything to say about it, we will get away as soon as possible.

Today we are making preparation for moving to Texas. We probably will start on the 27th. I am one of the group selected to be the sanitary detail that follows after the convoy and inspects latrines, kitchen sumps etc. We are most fortunate to be selected for it means that we will go at our own speed and can stop in towns to eat, look about for a few minutes, etc. I hope nothing interferes with the proposed plans.

I have no idea of the set up of Fort Sam & so can't say as yet if I can give you much warning about when I shall actually arrive. I shall try to telegraph on the way if I can't arrange it before I leave.

So George has finally become involved in the war. Does that mean he is to be drafted soon? If so, is he planning to enter the army or navy—the navy probably offering an opportunity for studying for a commission at once.

I don't understand Earl's set up at all. How can he be so foolish as to give up the good job he had? There must be something else that doesn't show on the surface.

I heard from Jim the other day & Marvin today—nothing yet from Jim Gallagher.

The package of food came today, but I haven't opened it as yet. I'm perhaps being selfish, but since I feel that I can't feed the entire detachment, I'm waiting until dark to expose the contents.

Will Mildred be up during my furlough? You mentioned in a recent letter about her having a vacation soon.

From now address your letters as follows:

Med., Det., 350th Inf.
Fort Sam Houston, Texas
A.P.O. #85
Give the address to anyone. I feel it will be all right now.

Seth has learned nothing more about his O.C.S. yet. He hopes to at camp, but I've begun to have my doubts. I have recently learned that no more candidates are to be accepted who have not seen overseas service. How true this is I can't say. I also fear the A.S.T. P. is a lost cause. I guess I shall have to join the air corps, & become famous that way.

I'll be seeing you soon,

Love,
Son
CPL. Truman A. Warner
Med. Det. 350th Infantry

Aug. 30 (?)
(At least it is Sunday)

Dear Mother & Dad,

Arrived at Sam Houston this afternoon. The camp seems very excellent, much better supplied & equipped than Gruber swimming pools, restaurants, etc.

Plan to be leaving for home in about a week. Will write later. But why write much, for soon I can tell you what I want to say.

Several will be heading east with me so I can be sure of having company.

Haven't been to town yet but did buy a great large can of fruit juice at the restaurant. So long for now.

Love,
Son

S/Sgt. Truman A. Warner
Med. Det., 350th Infantry

Oct. 8, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm afraid you will have begun to wonder what has happened to me all this time. I have started several letters, and if I can remember, I will enclose them. We were at Camp Bullis for a week & I was extremely busy. I finally gave some shots & found it isn't difficult at all, in fact, I rather enjoyed it,

The shots are routine ones that are given every year. You wanted to know if it presaged overseas duty. Well, I really don't know, but I may as well admit I think it might mean that. Everyone feels we may soon be on our way. However, don't worry about, for won't be used for a good long time.

Ulam's O.C.S. application has been returned to the regimental personell office & consequently it is very unlikely that he will be going to school. I do not plan even to apply, for it feels it would be a waste of time. The schools have an extremely small number of men now
being accepted, and most are not taken unless they have had over seas duty.

The package of food came today and the cookies already are gone. I'm saving the rest until later, except perhaps a can of fruit juice I hope to drink this evening.

We are having an inspection of all our clothing and other equipment tomorrow, & if that is completed on time I hope to go sight seeing around San Antonio. There is a rodeo in town and perhaps I can manage to get into that also.

I haven't visited Shirley yet for I went to Bullis the day I learned for certain she still lives here. I certainly am going to see her, though, if I can possibly make it.

Thank Isabelle & Sumner for the money they sent me.

I haven't written one letter in well over a week & so I feel I can't manage to get one off to them right away. Even Martha hasn't heard from me, and I do try to write to her at least once a week. Well, perhaps I shall make it tomorrow.

Has any more news come through concerning Warren Laws? That has kept me wondering.

Doug Alanbrook recently received a copy of one of the Boston papers that is published in minute form for subscribers overseas. Just about the size of folded note paper. You might look into it, if, I should get out of the country.

I am going to try for a three day pass in order to visit Mexico. I probably won't need the birth certificate, but it might prove useful. I think all that is needed is a statement signed by the colonel, giving permission to leave the country. The country around Monterey is described as being wonderful for sight seeing, so I do hope I can get to visit there, even if only for a short time.

Those of us who have received T/3 ratings really are working—more than any others in the detachment. I think some are jealous (the staff sergeants especially) and want to keep us as busy as possible. If it is supposed to be punishment, I don't mind, for I am getting a great deal of experience out of it.—records, work with the doctors, and all.

We have several new officers—Lt. Singmaster, Lt. Sergent & Lt. Reid—all young, new and inexperienced. Capt. Stratman is still with us & will stay I hope. It would be a great loss to us if he left.

The weather here has become much cooler, the nights especially. At Bullis I awoke shivering every night, prob. because I was too lazy to unroll my full field pack. Just plain lazy, I guess. The days are still hot, however.

Closing now. A fellow if cutting, or rather, is about to cut my hair. Write soon again, I hope.

Love,
Son
I’m finally mailing the letter I wrote several days ago and did not post. Two letters probably will reach you at the same time, but I guess you won’t mind.

We are going to Camp Cibolo tomorrow, for more training, and so it probably will be a good many days more before you hear from me again. Don’t let that disturb you, for it will only mean that I am working hard. Sgt. Plank, who has been recording the immunization shots is leaving on furlough and is leaving them for me to do. Sgt. Best is already on furlough and has left his office & clerical work on my hands. I guess I can keep busy. However, I really enjoy it, for I can get my hands into all sorts of records as well as medical work & honestly learn something that will prove of value.

Last evening I visited Shirley & her husband and baby, Pete. The baby is a cute little fellow with bright shiny eyes & curly blond hair. Shirley’s husband, Morris, was a lawyer, for about four years before entering the army. He has a really soft job in the air corps, almost like a civilian. He is a really nice fellow & Shirley is fortunate to have such a nice fellow as a husband.

Oct. 13, 1943

I didn’t have an opportunity to mail this letter before I left Houston. I wanted to add a few sentences today, before I got it off. Cibolo is nowhere nearly as nice as Camp Bullis, no cement floors, no cots, no mess halls. At night one might think we were back in medieval days sleeping in a peasants hut, sleeping by candlelight on straw pallets.

Only a few of us are left in the Cibolo area, the rest being involved in a three day problem. Fortunately, because it has been raining and is terribly muddy, I have been staying here working on the records.

Do you think you can find me a metal mirror or one of unbreakable glass? Don’t try too hard, for I haven’t looked in San Antonio as yet and I have a case to slip it in for otherwise it becomes so scratched it is no longer usable.

Wouldn’t you know Mort would be rejected? The same thing happened when he was examined for the air corps. One can make himself sick if he thinks enough about it. Adaptable psychology. Perhaps he learned his lessons well at college.

Several fellows are leaving today for school, but Ulman, & I are not on the list. I guess they feel we don’t need the work. I would have enjoyed it though.

Last Sunday a group of fellows came into camp from Camp Croft. Most of them were A.S.T.P. applicants who were not acceptable because they had too much college. Several had their degrees. They were there for months & then thrown out before actually going to school. And then pushed into the infantry with us. I had rather stay here than be sent away & have my hopes built up & then be dashed down again.

I’m going to try to get to Mexico soon if I can manage a pass. I hope to try it soon.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

We are still in Camp Bullis, working busily as usual, with very, very little time for ourselves. I’m planning to enclose a letter I started days ago, hoping it will keep you in touch with me somewhat. I will try to do better, but a few of us are kept on the move from daybreak to ten and eleven at night. I guess they didn’t give us a rating to sit about doing nothing. I fired the M-1 rifle a day or two ago and made out very well, bulls eyes and foursek. It surprised me and probably was only beginners luck but really fun. They don’t have much kick to them, though I really expected that my jaw would be knocked out of place after the first shot. I had no trouble at all.

Well, I’ve turned to ink now. My wandering pen has returned & now perhaps you will be able to read my scratchings.

The medics are being kept extremely busy here, apparently doing all the “dirty” work, even guard detail and at the same time continuing with the medical work.

A good many new recruits are to be added to the regiment tomorrow. Apparently the division is being prepared for some thing, heaven knows what.

Do you remember the fellow I wrote about meeting while in the hospital with the measles? He has been transferred to the medical detachment but is now confined to the stockade because he refused to use the weapons of the company to which he had been assigned. Consequently he had been sentenced to spend part of his army life under guard. Some of the conscientious objectors certainly are receiving unfair & pretty tough treatment.

Camp Bullis, Texas

September 30, 1943

Dear Mother and Dad,

We are spending several days at Camp Bullis, the Fort Sam Houston training area—thus the using a little of the time to type off a few lines to you. I’m afraid it will be rather difficult to write tonight, for I shall be giving shots.

I had a phone call from Shirley yesterday, but unfortunately could not talk very freely for I was in the major’s office. The address I received from Miss Sherwood was correct. I am hoping to visit her and her husband as soon as I am free, but that will not be for several days. I could tell that she was pleased to hear from someone at home.

I am planning to send more of my books home, for it’s altogether too difficult to try to carry all that truck in my barrack’s bag on my back. It pooped me out last evening just carrying it a few hundred yards. I guess that my furlough must have done me in.

9:30 in the evening. I’m still C.Q. & have just finished recording the immunization shots. One of the clerks has a radio here & Jimmy Durante just signed off. Time, the March of, now is blasting away.

My arms are slightly sore for I received a shot of tetanus, one of typhoid, a smallpox vaccination. Just a strengthening shot of each.
Dear Mother and Dad,

I'm finally eking out a few minutes for dashing off a few lines to let you know that I am still here at Fort Sam. I have never before been kept so busy since I first came into the army. (Terrible sentence structure, but it shows you how I feel.) I worked until midnight last night and began again today at seven. I just can't seem to type at all, perhaps because I never really could.

Do send me those articles you have been buying, for I make good use of them. I haven't had time to even look for a knife so have Dad get the scout knife for me. By all means send the flash light. The plastic ones are good but easily forced out of shape in a barracks bag. I'll send the old one home for you to use. They really are good when kept in good order. The cloth containers for the mirrors are fine. Their only purpose is to keep the surface from being scratched, and they will serve just as well as leather.

I have to send home most of my personal possessions so when I find time to get them off you will be receiving a bundle of all sorts of strange articles. I understand I may have to return my civilian shoes, but I hope that isn't the case. No one knows what is in store for us, some say manoeuvers, some say over seas. It really doesn't matter much, for we are in just as much danger here as we would be over there. We certainly won't see action for a good long time anyway.

I have received both packages safely, and certainly enjoyed every bit. One package arrived while we were at Cibolo and was most conveniently timed, for we were on the verge of starvation—well, almost. Everyone dove in and did his best to see that everything was cleaned up in short order. It didn't last long, but it was good while it lasted.

I received a letter from Don Thomsen today, the first in several months. He seems to be most busy, finding it difficult to get home even on weekends. He is teaching A.S.T.P. students as well as regular army and navy students. He explained to me just A.S.T. P. is—as if I don't know. I have heard about it long enough. Well, that is over for now as well as any possibility of O.C.S. I really think it is just as well. Maybe I'll get to see the world this way.

You are the only ones I have written to in weeks, so please explain to Martha and the others. I haven't forgotten about them, but I honestly don't have a minute to myself except when I am so tired I just feel I must do something to relax and not write letters. I went to town the other night and went canoeing in the San Antonio River that rambles through the very center of the city. –Seth Ulman, Doug Alanbrook and I. We had our pictures taken which I plan to enclose if I can remember to do so. Of course, the whole thing is reversed and makes us look even worse, but we honestly look pretty terrible anyway. Please don't get the idea we look quite as bad as that. Alanbrook is the fellow whom I was telling you about that was studying music in Boston.

(Oct. 22) If you should suddenly hear that I am overseas, don't let that worry you. We won't see action for quite some time anyway. No one knows what is in store for us—we may
not even move from here. Just don’t worry.

We have been giving typhus shots recently and that has kept us busy. Tonight I have a few minutes off and am trying to finish this letter I started several days ago. I just can’t find time to write, but I’ll try to do better. The T/3’s are kept busy, doing apparently all of the work while the others sleep or take it easy. Everybody jumps on us.

I am supposed to move into a room tomorrow because those who have been living there have failed to keep it in shape. I really don’t feel I should take it over, for they are really nice fellows & try to do their best in this hectic life we are living here. We don’t even have Saturday afternoon’s or Sunday’s off & tomorrow I am C.Q.—just to make life interesting & to see that I don’t get into any mischief.

Will try to write soon again.

Love,
Son

P.S. You might send me a few more air mail stamps.

Letter 103, Thursday (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 11

Dear Mother & Dad,

By the paper you can tell where I am again. I’m out as company aidman with M Company this time—a heavy weapons company. As I am writing this (in the cold with my gloves on) the gunners of a mortar are receiving instructions by telephone from the brow of the hill for firing their weapon. A mortar is used for shooting shells over a hill in this manner

[Drawing of a hill with mortar shell exploding on the other side of the hill]

War conditions are being simulated by airplanes flying over & dropping bombs in the form of bags of flour. However, I’ve seen no make believe bombs as yet but I’m sticking close to a tree just in case one should be aimed in my direction. The branches would break the fall & all I would receive would be a shower of flour, I hope.

Miss Todd’s Valentine package was two boxes of that home made candy we all like so much made by the blind (?) woman in Stonington. I received it out in the field & was it good. It certainly was nice of her to remember me in that way.

Letter 104, 1943-10-23 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 11

Fort Sam Houston
Texas

October 23, 1943

Dear Mother and Dad,

I am charge of quarters tonight and finally at eleven thirty am managing to type off another
Dear Mother & Dad,

While sorting through some old papers of mine tonight, I uncovered an old letter I started one day while in the field at Gruber. I thought you might enjoy reading so I am enclosing it tonight. It probably won’t make much sense now.

I packed another box this evening and will try to get it off with the package I wrapped.
months ago. I enclosed some air mail envelopes that stuck closed on manoeuvres. You might steam them open & use them yourself. You will find two flashlights, etc. Just keep them handy, along with the mocassins etc. in case I should write for them. Another package will follow shortly, containing my civilian shoes. I hate to get rid of them, so I am hanging on ‘til the last moment.

Sunday I visited two of the most famous Spanish missions in this country just outside San Antonio. They really are wonderful to see especially to one who is interested in history. You will find in the box two pamphlets telling about them & containing excellent illustrations. I’ve seen buildings in New England much older than these missions, but they do not have the antique and weathered appearance that these early churches have. Old, very old, & yet still strong though appearing on the verge of crumbling.

Several of the A.S.T. P. rejects I told you about have been assigned to the medics. They are really fine fellows, intelligent, able and a lot of fun. I’ve made friends with several of them & it was with two of them that I went visiting the missions Sunday.—Schuster, a law student at Notre Dame & Vance, an elementary & high school teacher with several years experience.

My head is aching slightly because I was using my eyes so steadily all day on the records. I need the sleep tonight to fight it off. Now for a shower & bed.

Good night!

Love,
Son
might be out of print now, so don’t worry if you can’t locate them. If you do send them, send them right away.

I sent two packages last evening so they should be arriving soon. I expect to send off another this weekend.

I fear I shall be unable to get down to Mexico, no passes long enough yet having appeared on the horizon. Soon though, perhaps. Remember the small map of the U.S. you sent me while I was in Gruber. Could you find me another of them as well as one of the world & send that along too? Don’t go to any great trouble for these things, remember.

The nights here are becoming really cold now—not freezing but such a change from the heat of the day that it seems much colder than it really is. Any snow yet home? Maybe I’ll be home yet this year to enjoy New England weather once again. We’ll see soon.

No, I haven’t been out to visit Shirley again. I hope to do so soon again, however. I spent a most enjoyable evening there & would like to see her again. She has such a nice husband & baby.

I don’t need any of my books yet for—my time is so fully occupied I have no leisure for reading. Just a magazine now & then. I hope you will explain my laxness to everyone, especially Martha.

I was sorry to her about Ed’s mother. I’m glad now we were able to manage a few minutes up there while I was on furlough. Tell Ed I was asking about her, won’t you?

Once again
And so to bed.

Love,
Son

Letter 107, 1943-10-30 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 11

S/Sgt. Truman A. Warner
Med. Det., 350th Infantry

Oct. 30, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Received a package today, but haven’t had the heart to open it yet, for your letter about Tony’s death came in the same mail and has about taken the starch out of me. It just doesn’t seem possible. I can hardly believe it, but still that disbelief doesn’t stop the tears from flowing. I suppose I may sound like a baby, but I just sat here and cried. I know it doesn’t help, but that was the reaction that came. We all must become used to that sort of news, I’m afraid, but such a sudden shock is hard to take. We had such hopeful plans for when the war is over. Now his chances are gone. The life of a war aviator may be front page news, but it too often ends in calamity. First Warren. Now Tony.

If you haven’t already done something about those books I asked about, forget them for the time being. I don’t want to be burdened with them right now.

All the fellows were away at school have been called back even though their courses have not been completed. They arrived here today.
When I unwrap the box later this evening I intend to pack it with my civilian shoes & a few other extras I need to get rid of for the time being & send them home. I'll write when I want them returned.
I'll write later when I can manage.

Love,
Son

P.S. Under the new set up I have been put in charge of the aid station!

Letter 108, 1943-10-31 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 11

CPL Truman A. Warner
Med. Det., 350th Infantry

Oct. 31, 1943
(Halloween)

Boo!
It's me again.
I called Shirley last evening and told her about Tony. Both she and her husband were good friends of Tony's & consequently were enormously shocked to hear the news.
Shirley said that you and her mother had been talking back & forth considerably recently and she felt you were worried about me. Don't deny it. I know it's true. You would worry about me if I were sitting at home, wrapped in blankets. And why do you do it, I can't see. Naturally I don't enjoy army life. But who does? I'm making the most of it and having a great deal of fun, as well as hard work. If I should be injured, I'm located at a spot where I can receive the most prompt attention. I have made a great many excellent friends, have travelled a great deal and seen many things I would otherwise have never thought of visiting. I'm not unhappy here. I'm just waiting, rather impatiently, until more propitious times permit me to do more things of my own choosing rather than just the few the army allows. I've had an opportunity to look back on what I was doing & make plans for what I want to do in the future. I do wish you wouldn't worry for when I know you are not at ease, I can't feel at ease either. Just remember that my chances for being injured are only as many, or even less, than if I were merely a civilian. We don't have bathtubs to slip in or clothes wringers to crush our fingers in. Our dangers are much more primitive. Just relax, for heaven's sake.

I visited a Mexican restaurant last evening and had a dish called "tacos". As Ulman explains them, they are simply tortillas (only really crisp tortillas) wrapped about ground meat & a little tomato etc. & dripping with butter (?). At first he didn't believe I didn't know what tortillas are, but finally I convinced him of my veracity. For your information, for I realize you don't know what they are either, let me say they remind me of nothing more exciting than thin pancakes. There is a difference of course, but beyond my meagre comprehension at present. You know how some potatoe chips curl up on the edges? The crisp tortilla reminded me of a giant potatoe chip holding the contents like a frankfurter roll does the hot dog. Very excellent though, and inexpensive.

I bought tow medical buttons such as I wear on my collar last evening in case Mildred
should want them. I think she wanted pins, but I am not sure. You might prefer to keep one yourself & let her have one as a lapel button. I’ll try to mail them home shortly.

No more packages for a while. I’ll let you know when you can begin them again. (Now! Sit down & begin to worry again. That’s right. It will help improve matters greatly.)

I have some pennies for you. I haven’t forgotten. I merely forget to put them in the packages I have been mailing recently. They will come along shortly.

I must to bed again

Good night.

Love,
Son

November, 1943
Letter 109, 1943-11-02 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 12

T/3 Truman A. Warner
Med. Det., 350th Infantry

November 2, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

I’m sending two envelopes of old letters as well as this letter this evening.

Not much to write about this evening except that the war news seems very, very excellent. Maybe all will be over in Europe before too long. Let’s hope so.

I’ve been taking it rather easy for the last couple of days, gold bricking you might say; however, I feel I deserve it, for I was getting pretty tired. I spent the day sorting my clothes, marking them and packing them away in my barracks bag.

I imagine that that was Doris Clark you met at Tony’s. She had been going with Tony for a good time before she joined the WAACS. Perhaps you will remember her as the girl whom I played opposite in “Death Takes a Holiday.” If you look up your year book you might recognize her there I imagine she was pretty well broken up about the affair.

Don’t worry about whether my title should be T/3 or S/Sgt. To be absolutely right it should be T/3. I’ll show you the difference in the insignia

(T/3) (S/Sgt)
The same except for the T in the middle.

I have several letters I would like to write & so I must close now.

Good night. Son

Letter 110, 1943-11-10 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 12

November 10, 1943

Dear Mother and Dad,
As you have undoubtedly surmised by now, our outfit has moved from San Antonio, and my address, as far you are to know it, is to be unknown. I am not at all free to say what I wish, for our mail is henceforth to be censored, but I shall give you any details as soon as I am able. I guess you know what that means.

I had hoped to visit Shirley and her husband before I left Fort Sam, but I simply couldn’t manage to see them. However, one evening I did call and tell them about Tony's death. I also wrote to Don Thomsen and gave him some information, knowing that his folks would not see a Danbury paper. Perhaps they did hear the radio news flash about it though.

I never before realized what vital military information I have been sending you, but the authorities feel that anything interesting is also taboo for heathen ears. All that I can think to write about appears to be censorable, but I'll plug on and see what I eke out.

In the last letter I received from you, you said another package was on its way. Unfortunately, I entrained before that day's mail was received and so I fear it is either sitting in the post office at San Antonio, or by the greatest luck, is following me back, several days behind. I hate to think all that wonderful food being stored away for the rats to gnaw at. They would enjoy it, though, I'm sure. I wish I had told the fellows who were staying behind for a while to open any package of mine that arrived and stuff themselves.

You can’t imagine how good it feels to be back in a good invigorating climate again after the enervating temperature I have been complaining about for so long. I assure you that those thin blooded Texas boys aren’t enjoying themselves. And it really isn’t cold yet. Just comfortably cool. Well, everyone in the army must have his own little peeve to gripe about.

I'm not finding such opportunity for correspondence so I hope you will tell every one that I am still struggling along. I haven't heard from Martha in quite some time now, but I understand how that is. I suppose May Sherwood is still passing off student teachers for her to train. Remember me also to Muriel, Marvin and Harold, won't you? I've been thinking a great deal about them lately, wondering if they are getting around as much as they did at one time. I suppose not, now that gas rationing has become even more severe and really cut down on the travelling.

Well, 'nuf said. As a matter of fact I can’t think of anything else to say that is permissible. And so to bed.

Love,
Son

P.S. I just learned I could tell you I am on the east coast. We probably will move again soon.

Letter 111, 1944-11-15 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 12

Dear Son;-

We had a little rain this afternoon and evening. I wonder if you have noticed how beautiful
the stars have been lately, so bright and so many of them. I am so glad you have moved into
town where the climate is warmer and hope you can stay there until you are sent home. How
I wish that day was here now. I went down town to day, and the Five and Ten had Hershey
bars 5¢ ones and I could have as many as I wanted so will send you some in the next package.
Grandma saw them also so she bought six for you. Isabel is going to buy Ernie Pyle's latest
book for you for Christmas. “Brave Man” but don't think I will send it to you as you probably
would rather have me add it to your collection which I am saving for you under the bed. Hope
you will home very soon to read it. I intended to purchase a copy but as long as she wanted to
get it for you I couldn’t do anything different. Maybe the editor of the News Times is a Dewey
man and probably all the arguments were not historically true but I would have liked to of
had a change made. The other one certainly hasn’t lived up to any of his promises and he has
done a lot of things I don’t approve of. I sent you a clipping about his stop at Bridgeport
and the remarks he made about a Connecticut woman which would have been better left unsaid.
I am glad Barbara liked the plate. I liked it but would rather have the small leather box. I got
one of the large calendars to day for Miss Toad and Mrs. Skiff and will mail them tomorrow.
Whenever I go in the Ives Book Store I try to get the leaflet put out by the Book of the Month
Club and am saving them for you. Friday the Campbell Club will be at the Church so we expect
to go down for supper. They are going to serve chicken patties. Haven't you received the strap
for your wristwatch yet and also the tooth brush I enclosed in another letter. It seems as if you
should have received more packages by this time. Keep writing for things so we can keep the
packages coming. Keep praying for peace and take good care of yourself. Lots of love

Mother & Dad

P.S. Sent you some V Mail paper in a large envelope a few days ago. Also put a package of
it in the last package.
it would help to give it to them, too. Otherwise, instead of receiving mail, all I will do will be to sit here in the barracks & wish.

Jim Birtles has not written for quite some time, but I suppose that is because he is keeping so busy again. He has been trying so hard & so long, I hope they don't flunk him out at the last minute. I feel that eventually he will make all right, tho'.

Jim Gallagher never writes any more at all. I can't understand him becoming so uncommunicative now that the army has him in its toils. I do hope those silver bars haven't turned his head as they did Mac's. If you ever hear anything from his mother let me know. I'm tired of writing & receiving no answers, so I'll try to keep in touch with him through you.

I've recently have received training manuals on various European languages. I have always needed some incentive of this sort to get me started on the road to conquering a foreign language, so perhaps this will be the push that I need. I know the method won't be too satisfactory, but perhaps it will give me the added practice I need for those graduate school language exams. How did Martha meet her language requirements at Yale? She was worse off in that respect than I, & so if she manages to pass, I guess I will be able to make it. Well, here I am dreaming again. I can't help it though!

Did you get my letter concerning Muriel, Marion & Harold? I wanted to be sure you know about them. Perhaps that letter never reached you. In order to check from now on, I'll number each letter as I write it so you will know whether or not any others have been delayed or lost in transit. Why don't you do the same? Be sure to let me know if you are getting everything I am writing.

Were any of the sentences in the last letter censored? I've tried not to divulge any vital military information, but I fear some facts that I don't consider important, the authorities will still am rather squeamish about writing freely, but I suppose that eventually I will get used to the idea of censorship. However, until that happens, I'll just take it easy.

Honestly, now, just where do you think I am? I can imagine you sitting at home, poring over maps of the U.S. & making wild & probably incorrect guesses. Don't let our mailing address fool you, however, for unfortunately I am not that near home. Would that I were! Would that I were! Some time I'll probably be free to tell you. In the meantime, you'll just have to remain in the dark unless you have a more sensitively telepathic mind that I think you have. You had better get Mrs. Skiff to help you. She's a good one for that sort of thing. Ha!

I really am feeling very well and am contented as can be expected. For heaven's sake, don't begin to worry for everything is & will be OK, I'm sure. Let's here from you soon, now, for the worse thing about being here is that I have not received one bit of mail since I have been here in this camp.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

I just mailed another letter to you a short time ago and in the meantime the mail has arrived containing your letter that was mailed on the 8th, two post cards from dad, and the church bulletin. At last the mail is beginning to catch up with me, but it is still far behind schedule.

The mail coming in is not censored so far and I understand it is not to be. There is no reason why it should be otherwise.

To the movies tonight, I hope, for the first time since coming here. The camp is pretty dead for we cannot leave to have any contact with the outside or tell anyone we are here. The only ones who know are hundreds of civilian employees and thousands of permanent personnel. Of course not one of them would say a word about our presence. If we are to be isolated lets have complete isolation and not a one sided affair.

Naturally I have done no Christmas shopping & now cannot even pretend to do any. Perhaps that is just as well, for then, at a later date, I can purchase my belated gifts that may prove more interesting than any I could possibly purchase here.

By the way, have you been to see the dentist lately? Remember what you said you were planning to do when the weather began to get cool. (I guess that question will set you back on your heels.)

And now I'll duck out.

Good night!

Love,
Son

P.S. From now on be sure to add my serial number when addressing my letters.

Letter 114, 1943-11-18 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 12

ARMY AIR BASE
Moses Lake, Washington

Dear Aunt Eva – Trum,

I received your lovely package yesterday, it is very nice of you I thank you ever so much.

I am in Tampa Fla, now stationed at Drew Field, it is a large field the buildings are built in an orange grove.

Alice wrote and told me Truman is a Sgt. I am glad he is getting along so well. (I told you so)

I have been ready to go overseas twice but haven’t gone yet. I am in hopes of coming home around the 1st of the year.

I am flying every day now it seems funny to fly over such level country as we have been used to the mountains around Wash.
I hope Trum has had a good season, Ruth wrote and told me how nice the house looks. I hear you have had snow already I wish you could spend the winter down here, we are having such lovely weather. Well I will say Good Bye

Love,

Dave

P.S. Thank you again, I am a lousy letter writer, how I hate to write letters. I'll be glad to have the war end so I won't have to write them.

---

Dear Mother & Dad,

I can't understand why I have not received a letter from you addressed here rather Fort Sam. I wrote just after I arrived and sent the letter air mail. Naturally it should have been home within two days at the most, and thus I should have heard from you several days ago. Did you ever receive my change of address cards? Something's rotten somewhere. Denmark perhaps?

The package finally caught up with me yesterday, and, surprisingly enough, the cookies were still in very edible condition. If you could have seen the way they disappeared, you would have been sure that they withstood their travels very well. In fifteen minutes, only the crumbs were left.

I've discovered that it probably will be wiser from now on to write on one side of a sheet only. If the censor uses his razor at all freely, none of the letter will remain intelligible otherwise, for I have been led to understand that a hole affects both sides of the paper. (Pretty corny)

Tell Martha I received her letter and will try to write soon. Well, I guess Mort has the breaks—now a junior high school position. What next? And all because he was “nervous” at his exam.

I received the knife dad has been asking about. Very good.

I hope to call home one of these evenings, for a long distance phone system has now been installed here. Perhaps you will have heard from me before this letter arrives.

I have no idea of how long we are to be stationed here, but I will take the chance & ask you to send me a few things. Try to get it off as soon as you can. If you can manage, send me several packages of razor blades, the razor blade sharpener, my mocassins and the two volumes of Shakespeare I wrote about before. Also an eversharp pencil, an inexpensive one, of course. Make the package small & perhaps it will travel more quickly.
I'm still well & getting along O.K. – perhaps this invigorating eastern air is pepping me up. Have you had any snow yet? I would like to see some before long. Just a young kid at heart, I guess, for I still look forward to the first heavy snow storm as eagerly as I did when I was in grade school. Maybe I'll manage some skiing yet this year.

I hope you were able to piece together my other letters without too much difficulty. Did you understand what I was telling you? I hope everything wasn't too mixed up, tho' I didn't have much time to say just what I wanted.

As yet I haven't made any arrangements for sending you part of my pay, but I intend to do so soon. I'll probably simply send money orders & take care of it in that way. Is that O.K. with you.

Take care of yourselves.

Love,
Son

Letter 116, 1943-11-23 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 12

Dear Mother & Dad,

It certainly was good to be able to talk to you last evening, but now I'm sure that the six hours of waiting was really worth it. There were a great many other things I wanted [to] say, but I simply couldn't find time to include them all. In fact, I had a terrible time trying to keep you quiet enough so the censor wouldn't shut us off and limit our conversation entirely.

Well, the letters at last are finally coming through in fairly good time. Your letters of the 19th & 20th both came today as well as dad's letter & picture, a post card & church bulletin. I guess they will come quite regularly now.

A good many of the fellows are laid low with colds, grippe etc. & so we are kept quite busy. I have escaped fairly well so far, suffering only a slight head cold. I hope I can stave off all the other ill affects. It really was a wise move getting my tonsils out before I came into the army. You know what condition I now would have been in otherwise.

There is so little we are free to write about that it really is quite difficult to find many new ideas to include. Don't look for them or expect them every time. I think you understand what I mean.

I haven't heard from Martha yet, but expect to soon. I'm afraid those incorrectly addressed cards will mix my mail for months now. Straighten Miss Todd on my address, for I sent her a card also.

I'm beginning to work on my French, but progress is slow, for I'm spending very little time on it. Perhaps I'll conquer it slowly.

Ulman arrived here today but did not receive my letter in time to buy us a supply of books. However, we are hoping that some one will be able to get us a supply of reading material. I
personally have a fair supply now, but not a good variety. I'll make out though.

The picture of dad is fair but not smiling enough. How about a good one of both you and dad. I'm including a picture, a horrible one, taken at Fort Sam just before we left. – terribly out of focus but still me – (and others)

Visitors in the barracks have interrupted my writing tonight & I've lost my continuity of thought – what little I had. Cold et al force me to cease for the night.

And so to bed

Love,
Son

Letter 117, 1943-11-25 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 12

T/3 Truman A. Warner
Med. Det., 350th Infantry

Nov. 25, 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

Thanksgiving Day and army food. Not a good combination, but better than I expected in this gastronomic nightmare. The cooks out did themselves in honor of the Pilgrims and came forth with a good meal of turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, peas, salad, rolls and butter, celery, nuts, grapes, candy and coffee. Not bad, but nothing to compare with the Thanksgiving meals of previous years. I made out well enough, though, but you can be sure my thoughts were on you. Oh, yes, an addenda. We also had fruit salad & pumpkin pie. All out of tin messkits & canteen cups.

From now on send my letters V-mail. While we are still here the letters will be sent as regular mail. When we leave they will be sent, after being photographed, by plane and will be taken care of more rapidly than regular air mail. Tell Martha, etc. the same thing.

Dad would do better from now on to write letters also rather than his cards. The letters will come much more quickly & regularly.

I spent today in bed, except for noon, trying to recover from an intestinal cold I had some how acquired. After stuffing myself with aspirin and sulfadiazine, I'm more myself this evening. By tomorrow I should be myself again, all fit and ready for another hike.

Enough, enough for this evening.

Love,
Son

Letter 118, 1943-11-28 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 12
Dear Mother & Dad,

Your Christmas package arrived Friday afternoon and contained many unexpected gifts—the sheath knife creating special interest in all who saw it. How did you manage to get a Remington knife? Several here have been trying to buy one similar to that and have found it impossible to get one. It really is the tops—much better than the one I lost on maneuvers. Also you made an excellent choice in selecting that particular book. I'm saving that to read while traveling. I had been planning to buy several pair of wool socks myself and so those individually wrapped packages were well chosen. A very thoughtful gift, very practical & usable.

I believe I never told you that the large flashlight also arrived and is the type for which I was looking. The novel head surprised me, however.

Yes, I have also often thought about the paragraphs I wrote while at Gruber. I believe I spoke about them in the letter concerning Muriel, Marion & Harold. In fact, I am sure it was in that particular letter; if you missed it, be sure to look again. It is there, and I would like you to check to see if you still understand what I meant.

Martha's letter shows that she has a good understanding of what has been going on. Her presumptions are quite correct. However, your reference in regard to Mrs. Skiff, that I feel she was also thinking about, is incorrect. I was talking about the newspaper work she used to do in the daily New York papers. I hope what I said previously didn't puzzle you too much. I think it is straightened out now, however.

My letter this evening has been interrupted by a most complicated religious discussion. Nothing violently complicated, but quite interesting for noting other people's reactions. Of course I couldn't refrain from adding my voice to the uproar and fear I tended to upset the even tenor of some of those with the hidebound opinions. At least I saw a glimmer of thought where before there was only blind obedience to predigested dogma. It's a great treat to see people actually begin to think about a topic for the very first time, even if you disagree with their thoughts. Definitely it is a move in the right direction.

I heard from Mildred, Friday. She is planning to leave the hospital soon and go into private nursing. She also mentioned another proposition she was considering, probably in a doctor's office. I hope she makes out well, for she is not at all contented where she is now. Has she said any more to you about her marriage?

Even if packages cannot be mailed, will it be possible to put small Pocket Books in a manila envelope and mail them as you would regular envelopes of that kind? Perhaps you could get a little reading material to me in that way. If that is permissible, let me know and I will give you some suggestions as to what to send.

I have just been introduced to what are called “Pony Editions” of Time Magazine. They are reduced editions of the regular magazine printed, apparently, for those in the armed forces. Will you see what you can find out about a subscription to it—prices, mailing, etc. and let me know.

Time Magazine
Circulation Manager
330 East 22nd St.
Chicago, Illinois
There is also a similar edition of Newsweek.
Weekly Publications, Inc.
350 Dennison Avenue
Dayton, Ohio
I might like to subscribe to one of these if I can find out enough about the terms of the subscriptions.
The news of Miss Conover's marriage certainly came as a surprise to me. I suppose now that that miracle has happened, Miss Harrison will be getting out her powder & paint and trying anew.
Once again, good night.

Love,
Son

Letter 119, 1943-11-30 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 12

Dear Mother & Dad,
I heard from Jim B. & Miss Todd today, their letters of course having been addressed 88 – C. Miss Todd thought perhaps you had been incorrect in giving her the address you did and thus sent her letter to the address given on the change of address card. I'll try to straighten her out on that soon. Jim thought I probably was already on the high seas, but has a Christmas present on his way to me. I will take care of my remembrances at another and more appropriate time.
My mail & packages are coming through quite regularly now, but are still held up a little along the way. However, as long as it keeps coming, that is the important thing. If you fail to hear from me for quite some time, nevertheless, keep the letters coming, for they will catch up with me eventually. I'm planning to use regular air mail as well as V-mail, making the air mail notes more complete – if an when I can find the time to write.
The razor blades, sharper, pencils, mocassins, and Shakespeare arrived safely. I have a fairly large library now, too large for carrying comfortably, but, as you know, I hate to discard any books. In addition to novels & history I am also toting a French book with me in the hope of gaining a smattering of ignorance in that language.
Mary Anita finally broke down and wrote me a short note despite the fact that I haven't written to her since the time of my furlough. Tell her that I was truly glad to hear from her and had already started a letter to her before her unexpected missel arrived. I haven't finished writing to her yet, but assure her that my intentions are excellent.
I can't remember to number my letters, so I'll give up that idea for a while – probably to
begin again soon. 

Have you checked on those paragraphs which I referred to at Gruber? You may not find them at first, but look at the beginning & the end.

How are Marvin & Muriel getting along with their plans for redecorating? You said you couldn’t find the location of Marvin’s brother’s address. If you can’t find it in that particular letter, look at the letter before it. I’m sure you should find it there. I would send it to you again but I have destroyed the note I received from him; unfortunately having failed to put it in my address book. Let me know if you find it for I would like to get in touch with him again. If Marvin returns soon get it from him.

My letters, I fear, are deteriorating terribly, containing nothing but the ordinary, mundane exchanges of news. I can’t write what I would like & about those things that would prove most interesting. I hope that the time will come when I can write a little more freely.

Did you have turkey for Thanksgiving dinner? The newspapers seemed to indicate that a great proportion of civilian dinner tables lacked the presence of the noble bird. We made out well here in that respect. & I do hope you fared as well.

Well, the Pepy’s ending again.

And so to bed.

Love,

Son

December, 1943

Letter 120, 1943-12-03 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 13-14

1.

CPL. Truman A. Warner
Med. Det. 350th Infantry

3 December 1943

Dear Mother & Dad,

I spent most of the morning hours watching our convoy form. We had been on the move since late last evening, but not until about noon did the SS. James B. Richardson reach its appointed position. We knew, of course, that the vessels would leave the protection of the bay one by one and assemble at a designated rendezvous, and thus we had been scanning the fog draped horizon since early morning for a glimpse of the vessels that had already arrived at the appointed spot. The ship’s crew picked them out first & began to converse by means of the heliograph. Gradually we too, with our unaided eyes, could see their misty gray silhouettes emerging in the far distance slowly increasing in sharpness as we rapidly drew near. Being a troop ship, we came into position in the center of the moving mass of vessels, the cargo boats surrounding us and the navy forming a protective ring about all. It was difficult to discover if we had now stopped & were preparing to anchor or only seemed stationery because we were
continuing to move at the same rate of speed as the others. When the anchor was not lowered we knew that at

2.

last were on our way. Our trans Atlantic epic had begun.

Once we had reached Camp Patrick Henry near Hampton Roads, Virginia, we knew we would soon be on our way overseas. Great secrecy was imposed on us, permitting no notification of our relatives or friends of our whereabouts, but for only a few did the thoughts of overseas service raise unsurmountable fears. Of course everyone made the usual mental reservations of preferring to travel at a time when the seas were unmolested and of choosing his own destination, but deep underneath I believe all were looking forward to the trip as a great adventure.

The life at the staging area was miserable because of the restrictions that were placed on our activities and especially because of the gastronomic performances put forth three times a day in the place of healthful meals. The service clubs and theatres and U.S.O. shows & Red Cross workers made attempts to cheer the departing heroes to be, but most of the men had definite plans of their own for making the most their last few days in America. Within the limited means available, all were going on a final spree. “Eat, drink

3.

and be merry, for tomorrow we may die.” The beer drinkers drank & drank until they could hold no more & those whose interest was the movies haunted the theater at every performance. I rather gloated to myself over the antics of those who were so involved in one particular small circle of living that they felt they must concentrate on it for a last few hours to focus its image as their memories & prided myself that nothing had such a grip on me. Then, knowing I was to leave in a day or two, I found myself roaming through the service club libraries, thumbing through old favorites & looking longingly at volumes I had always planned to peruse & now must put off reading until an even more distant future—likewise stuffing my brain for the unknown future.

Then came the order to pack the barracks bags. B bags first with all the equipment not needed for the journey—piled in front of the barracks & then sorted away to be loaded on our boats. Naturally, I, being a conservative soul and fearing I would not have enough equipment with me, saved too much for the A bag & had to stagger under the weight of an especially heavy bag. Then, on the ___ of December, one

4.

year exactly after entering the army, we were awakened at three in the morning, breakfasted before four and were heading toward the train by five. An hour’s ride brought us to the docks where the Red Cross women rushed at us with hot coffee as we stood in line, waiting to climb like well burdened burros up the steep incline of the cleated gang plank. In response to our last name we replied with our first and middle initial & were rushed aboard to begin our great adventure.

The “Liberty” Ships are large and yet small, high enough above the water level so that you think twice about jumping off “just in case” a torpedo should find you and yet not high enough
to prevent the waves from dashing up on the decks. The enlisted men's living quarters (for almost five hundred) is in the hold and consists of one medium sized room with bunks of a sort squeezed into every chink & cranny about the periphery of the room, leaving the center available for dining. (N.B. “Dining” is a too fine word to express & describe the eating situation aboard the ship, but I'll let it stand.) Fortunately, the upper three grades of non-coms

[5.

have special quarters with a little more privacy, and beds with mattresses, sheets & pillow cases. The officers also have their own section, but none are really convenient & comfortable—everything crammed & cluttered with packs, barrack bags, belts, canteens, coats, gas masks, magazines, etc. Our room, for example, housing twelve men, measures about nine feet by fifteen. And we are much better situated than most.

I never before realized how apt a phrase is Masefield's “The lonely sea and the sky.” But that is what an ocean voyage consists of – the sea and the sky. All else is subservient.

The sea is blue, but such a dark blue that it resembles blue-black ink, lined from the ship to the distant horizon by the splotchy patch of the wave crests. However, close to the ship itself the waves foam & froth with a snowy whiteness, and as the spume & suds swirl below the surface the water is transformed in color to a pale baby blue that is just as quickly changed to the forbidding blue black of the rest of the water until the prow of the vessels again cuts through the swell.

The sea is blue, but such a dark blue that it resembles blue-black ink, lined from the ship to the distant horizon by the splotchy patch of the wave crests. However, close to the ship itself the waves foam & froth with a snowy whiteness, and as the spume & suds swirl below the surface the water is transformed in color to a pale baby blue that is just as quickly changed to the forbidding blue black of the rest of the water until the prow of the vessels again cuts through the swell.

[6.

Today our attention was briefly diverted by a large school of porpoises lithely flipping themselves out of the water, skimming just about the surface, and effortlessly slipping beneath out of sight. They have excellent natural camouflage of the usual type peculiar to fish – dark on top & light beneath – to hide from their enemies both above & below.

A small whale also passed near by. All I saw was the shiny black buck protruding slightly above the water and a slight spout of water now and then. A few jelly fish also were washed by as well as scattered and brown masses of sea weed.

With sunset the black out precautions came into effect. Not a match nor a cigarette. The navy has orders to fire at any light it sees. Not wise to make a mistake. The first night some one of course took the chance but was apprehended before any real danger.

[7.

resulted. We were confined below decks for the evening. Punishment enough I'll have you know.

Not yet sea sick but closely approaching that horrible precipice. Vaccilating rapidly. The sea is much more rough today & these Liberty ships move with every wave. The best prophylactic measures seem to be (1) stay in the open air on deck (2) do not watch the waves or the horizon
(3) lie down if you are feeling ill & eat well. If you stand, your shifting center of gravity throws you off balance & you shift to regain equilibrium – a double move that consequently doubles the agitation in the middle ear. Sitting lessens the number of changes necessary & lying down reduces the body movements to a minimum. A scientific approach you will note.

Reading material “The A.B.C. Murders” by Agatha Christie. Also completed yesterday the omnibook version of “Citizen Tom Paine” by Howard Fast.

8.

The much expected supply of candy aboard is not here – one bar a day and that is not expected to last long.

Dec. 7, 1943

Two years after Pearl Harbor. One year ago tonight was my last evening at Devens.

Notatia [prob. Notitia]: Marine flora and fauna:– Brown sea weed still prevalent. Green sea weed just below surface. I saw a flying fish today but at first was doubtful as to what it actually was. I knew no birds should normally be found as far asea as this and the strange creature was too large to be a dragon fly (which at a quick glance it closely resembled). It flew a good many feet, just above the water’s surface, & slipped back out of sight ahead of the ship.

Errata – Afore mentioned whale probably was not such. Sailors say it was a black fish. What is the difference?

The waves were considerably higher today, tossing the boat about a bit. For me the spot least conducive to seasickness is near the bow of the boat, standing by the rail. At this spot you move with the ship and not at cross purposes to it. Remember the strange feeling in

9.

your stomach that results from a quick descent in a ferris wheel? That is how each downhill trip into the trough of a wave affects me. Not all violent like that of a roller coaster. But continuous! The spray from well placed swells of unexpected intervals, today doused any one within range. After two wettings I learned my lesson & discovered that the safest spot is next to the rail on the windward side. When the high wave approaches all that is necessary is to duck behind the solid steel rail and let the water fly past, over your head.

I often wondered what a convoy would look like and I supposed you have too. It is just as it looks like in the pictures – great numbers of ships, moving in definite positions in columns & ranks. However, the vessels are much closer to each other than I expected, coming near enough at times so that you can see individuals on the ships & the type of cargo on the decks. Previously I had imagined that the ships were separated by distances of miles. Instead you can see a great portion of the convoy by simply

10.

looking fairly close about you.

At night, even with the aid of the moon, it is difficult to see any ship that is not in your immediate vicinity. The black-out naturally is strict, not a glimmer showing except with light signals are found necessary.
Dec. ___, 1943

Have you ever tried to bathe in salty sea water? Well, don't. All the showers on the boat use water directly from the ocean, and let me assure you, it is not good. Even with hard water soap you cannot raise a lather. I remember the fresh water showers we enjoyed after swimming in the sound, but never before did I appreciate their value. The water cools you off, but as for the dirt, you have to scrape it off, with the towel.

Warmer & warmer is the weather. Today the top of the hatch was removed so those in the hold could stand the heat. I took a sea bath today & could almost feel the vitamins soak into my skin. Wonderful. This is practically like a pleasure cruise. Lying under the blue sky with the warm beating on you, it is difficult

11. to believe that the world is at war. I often wonder how those fighting under the warm tropical sun of the Pacific react to the martial situation under such peaceful conditions. War weather should be cold & bitter, dreary, desolate. I fear I would be tempted to lie in the sun and bask if such were the weather, and that weather failed to correspond with my interpretation of the mood of war, I never was much for this war business anyhow; I fear I am too even tempered to be a good soldier. More and more do I agree with Huntington and his climatic & geographic interpretation of history. My suggestion for ending the war is to transport all the war mongers to the tropics and let the heat sweat their excess energies out of them.

The moon light is beautiful on the water tonight. I've been lying on the hatch all evening enjoying the ocean breezes and talking about home. One of the fellows said, “I bet your folks at home worry more about you than you do yourself. Why is that?” The answer is simple. I know what I am doing and those at home do not. I know I’m doing well, while those at home let their

12. imaginations run rampant, picturing me in all kinds of difficult situations. I’ve learned to make myself at home wherever I may be and take things as they are, making the best of a few unplanned months. Think of me as enjoying myself (as much as anyone can) and you won’t be far from wrong.

We wear our canteens and “Mae Wests” (life vests) all day, or have them immediately available. At night we sleep fully clothed except for shoes – just in case. However, all sleep peacefully without worry, knowing we really are most safe, especially with the destroyers patrolling at all times and an airplane carrier close by. No one really worries about subs, though occasionally they are mentioned half in jest, half seriously, as some mystic power that just might put in its appearance.

Have begun to read “Red Badge of Courage” by Stephen Crane. It is excellently written, showing a keen observation of a man’s mode of thought. I think you would appreciate his writing. Try it. His observations on the army activities are excellent. Though written about the Civil War they still hold true
Several days, without comments. Just too busy evenings talking & too sleepy when below deck to write.

The sun bathing has been __ssing for several days now. Apparently the period of warm weather we enjoyed was during our passage through the Gulf Stream. As we come closer to our destination it should become much warmer again.

The sea has been really choppy for several days now, the boat twisting & rolling so that the deck seems in danger of being covered. The vessels around us bob like corks, and I know we must be doing the same. The froth pushed off by the bow cutting the swells now extends a good many feet beyond the ship. The wind catches the water at the crest of the waves and carries innumerable white globules for a considerable distances, where they pepper the surface like swiftly falling rain drops.

I have been trying to think how I

14.

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most puzzling to me. Of course, on the surface Dr. Hudson's philosophy sounds excellent & his idealistic altruism probably is the drawing card. However, looking deeper, I would say that his ideals are not at all what they appear, for his “good works” are based on a purely mercenary basis, like a business investment expecting satisfactory returns—Not doing his deeds because he wants to but because he thinks it will help him personally. What are those who are not wealthy expected to do? Everyone cannot spare money. Cannot they do other acts just as valuable. I believe they can. Hudson is chanting the soul soothing practice of the philanthropists, passing out dimes so their money tainted consciences will [be] salved (Ivy Lee & John D.). However, the point that most readers apparently miss, because if they understood his meaning they would raise a cry against his attack on orthodox religion, is the idea behind Bobby’s talks with his grandfather & with Dr. McLaren concerning religion. Bobby is pointing out the fallacy of organized religion & the mumb-jumbo that contributes so much to it. I believe in Volta, Maker of the dry battery & Father of the Leyden Jar and in his successor, Ampere who codified the formula for electro dynamics, etc. He suggests that religion is personal & to be a valuable religion, it must be so. A group spirit in living is important, but to no one does the same word have the very same connotation – again it is personal, not integrally a part of an organized institution. Today you will find too many who cry that religion is nothing without a specific creed & a specific church. As if they could mean the very same to all members anyway. Why don’t people think rather than be blindly led. Also he comes near to expressing the philosophy of the Deists, who doubt the divinity of Christ but do accept him as a great, possibly the greatest, philosopher, who ever lived. In that line of thinking, if you don’t let it shock your own personal ideas of Christianity too much, I would suggest you read the “Life of Jesus” by Renan. You will find it amongst the books I sent home from Fort Sam. I fear it will tend to disrupt the even tenor of your ways, but you don’t have to accept it as true, you know.

Dec. __ 1943

Tonight, the water being churned up by the boat, has been sparkling & glowing with a phosphorescent light. Apparently some small marine plants or animals were exposed to view, causing this phenomenon so unexpected and unusual. Little points of light, and a few larger areas resembling small jelly fish, swirl about in the foam, illuminating the entire wave. Looking carefully, small isolated spangles can be picked out, floating in the dark water not disturbed by the boat’s advance. Resembles an illuminated fountain or the sky shimmering under the influences of Aurora Borealis.

Reading material – “The Master of the Day of Judgment” by Leo Perutz (German) - a tale of suicides, supposedly caused by a peculiar drug that effects the seat of imagination in the brain, releasing the subconscious to torture the victim. Very improbable but an interesting style.
Dec. 1943

Last evening completed “The Return of the Native” by Louis Adamic and consequently failed to note down any facts worth observing during the day, of which there were none. Adamic writes about Jugoslavia, its customs, troubles, economics, famous citizens, scenery, etc., but especially puts his emphasis on the politics and European relationships of his nation. Very interesting observations and many of his fears have proved true, now that the war has finally forced them to the head lines. The rise of such guerilla fighters as the Chezniks and Partisans is a most natural outcome, considering the type of people inhabiting that turbulent Balkan state. His type of book merely hints at the type of problems that will face peacemakers after the war, but it shows the need for a clearer understanding of such delicate matters, which I fear

19.
most of the politicians, map changers and nationalistic leaders will not even be aware.

Read today “Lysistrata” by Aristophanes.

These ships are well armed with anti-aircraft guns and a large cannon like weapon on the stern of the ship. The gunners fired today, just for practice, aiming high into the sky or between ships at the rear of the convoy. We gained a faint idea of the din involved in a battle at sea. No wonder so many become deaf for hours after such an affair.

When one sees how few trucks, etc. can be carried on one time on one ship, he begins to realize why supply lines play such a vital part in the present war. Supplies can only dribble across the ocean.

Dec. 18 –

Still reading.
“Dynamite Cargo” by Fred Herman, story of a convoy to Russia.
“Topper” by Thomas Smith

The troops have been dosed daily with atabrine, a substitute for quinine, a protection for malaria. I spend part of my working day, bisecting each yellow pill & counting the correct number for each company. Unfortunately, the smart-alecs are not taking theirs but are willing to take a chance simply because they “don’t like to take pills.” They may be sorry some day.

We practiced giving each other intravenous shots today, in preparation for eventually coming upon the necessity of giving plasma injections. I believe Capt. Stratman was really pleased with our success, for each one of us hit the vein the first time without finding it necessary to stab each other more than once. A good record, I’d say. Much easier than I expected. Capt. Stratman & Lt. Singmaster certainly are proving themselves to be excellent medical officers, and also show a surprising amount of ability as instructors.

Dec. 18 –
“Stillwell’s Retreat from Burma” in Omnibook

21.

Today we turned in our American bills so that can be replaced with the gold seal money used in the occupied countries. Egad! The amount I found in my money belt! It shouldn’t happened to Rockefeller. I had intended to send most of my bank roll home while still in America, but was unable to do so. I'll get it back to you as soon as I can.

We are nearing our destination. The story of the trip is very meager, but it will give you an idea of a few of my experiences. Much has been eliminated, but I'll tell you those tales when I get home.

Oh, yes. The phosphorescent water increased as we neared Africa. Great globules of light, like large pieces of floating driftwood passed by, fascinating me that I stood by the rail for hours simply watching the lights go by.

I'll add the rest of the tale in another installment.

Letter 121, North Africa (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 13-14

Dear Mother & Dad,

By now you should have received the letter I wrote on the boat and the one I was able to scribble off shortly after we arrived on this continent. Now we have at last reached our training area, and I hope to write a little more regularly.

While I was eating my Christmas (turkey) dinner yesterday, I thought of you folks just getting out of bed, probably planning to visit Grandma's for the day. Though the food was out of a messkit, it nevertheless was good, including even fruit cup, dressing, and even cranberry sauce.

So North Africa is a warm section of the world, is it? Don't you believe it. It may be along the ocean but located as we are, high in the mountains, it is darn cold. I sleep at night with a shelter half and four thicknesses of blanket under me, and two blankets, an overcoat and a rain coat over me.—and it still isn’t very warm! The days aren’t much warmer either, for since this is the rainy season, the sun shines only once in a while when it can break through the clouds that we can see hitting the sides of the nearby mountains. Not pleasant. But not unbearable either. I understand the winter here is over in January.

I hope to get to town in a week or two and see what I can do about souvenirs. I fear I may not be very successful for the Arabs are really sharp traders, and, as you know, I am not very good at business.

Cont.
Dear Mother and Dad,

This is another one of those letters I won’t be able to send for a good long while, but when you do receive it you will have some idea of what I experienced and saw during my first few days in Africa.

We knew, shortly after we sailed, that our destination was to be Casablanca and so, the morning after our few Liberty ships left the main convoy, the most inquisitive of us were at the bow of the boat peering through the sea fog for the first glimpse of land. The distant gray clouds lay so close to the horizon that it was at first doubtful whether we were seeing some hazy land mass or merely the same type of cloud that always appeared to be bumping into the water miles away. However, as the shapes slowly maintained a definite outline we began to pick out mountain crests and then a tall tower of a light house. Very suddenly we were sure. The hills were definite, then the hazy bulk of buildings, until even fairly small gleaming white buildings could be identified. French Morocco was straight ahead.

With all our equipment on deck, everyone straining to see all he could, we saw the Casablanca harbor rapidly become a reality. The ships followed one another in a single column, following the vessel that was guiding us through the mine fields. Then, one by one the boats were led directly to their respective piers. We waited in the harbor until night before even starting toward the docks themselves amusing ourselves meanwhile by watching Arabs frantically rowing out of the paths of the troop ships, speculating as to where we would be located, noting with satisfaction that the city was not under blackout regulations and eating our first K Ration meals.

On the trip across I had begun to study French, and we was eager to learn if I could
understand anything at all the natives said. I need not have worried. Those on the small
boat that brought the pilot boat aboard began almost immediately to beg for “cigarette” &
guided the boat alongside ours while the fellows threw down those much sought after items.
Watching them distracted my attention from our own progress, for unexpectedly we ourselves
had docked.

Loaded with a full field pack and blanket roll, overcoat & bulging barracks bag, we de-
scended an even steeper gang plank than the one we had climbed over two weeks before at
Hampton Roads, and stepped

2) on land.

Without even an opportunity to glance about, we were rushed onto waiting trucks and
lined up in the shadows of the nearby ware houses. Then the Halloween atmosphere surged
around me. White, ghostlike figures slipped in and out of the shadows – hooded Arabs, hur-
rying with the gait peculiar to them, turbaned natives, Mohammedans with Fezzes, shuffling
sandles [sic], all begging for cigarettes. It really was eerie, a really “spooky” setting. One in
particular repeatedly tapped my fingers clinging to the side of the truck, called me Mohammed,
& pestered me for “smoke.”

With a sudden lurch the convoy raced off into the darkness toward the nearby staging area.
My memories of this trip include beautiful mustached French foreign troops, extensive walled
buildings, faint yellow lights shining through slats covering windows, modern city buildings,
horrible odors in one section, and a pile of delicious looking oranges, enormous in size, that I
glimpsed in the lighted window of a native store.

Camp Dombie Passage – over night and part of the next day – our first acquaintance with
African winter weather. I managed to fall over a tent peg that did not have a rope attached
and sprain my ankle. The other casualties were those who, while helping unload the boat, saw
a huge wine barrel roll off a wagon & break open in the street. Having heard of French wine,
& being thirsty, they sumped [sic] – by the canteen cup full. It was native wine, apparently
“spiked” with hashish, and those who imbibed at all heavily were practically lifted aboard the
camp bound trucks. One in particular succumbed to the wine & the next day underwent the
agonies of a wine drunk and a hashish jag. I learned my lesson then. When men are necessary
to hold down one man, fighting as if he had the strength of twenty, I’m convinced of the
advisability of temperance.

Packed into trucks, we dashed to the R.R. station at Casablanca, looking for the carriages
that we understood were to carry us to Oran. I would hardly have believed it to be true, for
the next chapter of my life could have been entitled “three days in a horse car” or “man vs.
sardine.” I thought the 40 & 8 had disappeared with

3) World War I era. Ah, no! The American army, however, is considerate of its men and thus
only 30 of us were loaded into the tiny box cars – along with our packs and boxes of rations
for the journey. Now we are not permitted to write how extensively the African R.R. are being
used for troop movements, but I am including a clipping from “Stars & Stripes” that well
expresses the sentiments of those who have indulged in this particular form of torture. The
cars supposedly had been washed clean but evidences of former occupants were very evident. A lyster bag of water was supplied in every other car. When the scenery became attractive we discovered that a great portion of the side could be opened, and so all day long we stood lined along the side of the car, gawking at the passing sights. Never did I expect to sit with my feet hanging down over the road bed, swinging in the passing breeze. A wild ride we had, too. We, of course, received the car with a flat wheel, and so bumped along the entire journey. One night we awoke to find Arab workers dismantling a section of our underpinnings which they nonchalantly wired up out of the way & thus we continued on our way. We stopped at any or every provocation for anywhere from a few minutes to an hour or two, with only the engine whistle to warn of the unexpected start. At times I've seen several men dashing along by the side of the train, running to catch up with the particular car in which he had been riding. One fellow dropped some of his equipment and another, in a car quite a distance back jumped off, picked it up, ran along side, and got on his car again. A good indication of our speed at times. At night it was physically impossible for all thirty of us to have enough room for sleeping. The first night we just tumbled down hit-or-miss and consequently several had to stand part of the night. Attempting to remedy the situation the next night, we charted a plan of head to foot sleeping that allowed everyone to lie down but not enough room.

4) for breathing. It just can’t be done.

The roads are extensively used for traffic of all kinds. We passed several loads of German prisoners on their way to Casablanca, as well as a great deal of civilian transport.

The rail, of course, is narrow gauge and reminded me of the Tooner Ville Trolley of comic strip fame. The track from Casablanca up into the mountains is extremely steep and winds around the mountains, one section being a few hundred feet above the next. There are enormous numbers of long tunnels that cut through the edge of the cliffs. The smoke from the coal burning engine, as it accumulates in the tunnels, becomes almost unbearably dense, & when the train itself has long since left the tunnel, thick clouds of black smoke could still be seen pouring forth as if from a factory chimney. At times it is easily possible to see both ends of the train at once as the engine goes about one section of a giant curve and the last cars are just coming about another curve in the distant rear. Steep cliffs, narrow bridges, long tunnels – all became common sights – and each well guarded by a small squad a [sic] native troops well camouflaged in the rugged banks.

At each stop the natives dashed up to sell us oranges, pecans, eggs – anything possible. We were forbidden to buy anything but supplies mysteriously appeared on board at each stop.

I tried to keep a list of towns we passed thru but was only fairly successful. I forgot to jot down many of them & the intervention of darkness interfered also. Here are a few of the names – Casablanca – Meknes – Taza – Msouri - Safasfat – Guercif – Monsurab – Tlemcen – Dubonnet – Oued-Chol La Morcierie – Descartes – Tabia – Slissen – Magenta.

Letter 123, 1943-12-27 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 13-14

143
Dear Mother & Dad,

Don’t become alarmed if two letters arrive in the same mail, for I am breaking down and penning another while still on the boat. I also am planning to write to Martha this evening, so you also might ask her if you too can read it. Put your two letters together, and perhaps you can gain a clear picture of my activities out of that. Ugh! Terrible English, what?

Capt. Stratman today gave us a class on intravenous injections, each one of us sticking another quivering victim. It proved to be very successful, though, no one having to probe for the vein more than once. Quite a record for even medical students to aim at. My only scar is a small red area covered by a tiny scab.

Do you remember the question you asked me when I called home shortly before I sailed? My answer is yes, but you never told me exactly how you felt about it. I’m quite anxious to know, for I have been thinking seriously about that lately, now that the boat trip has given me more free time to consider the matter carefully. I also mentioned it while in Gruber, but the plans for A.S.T.P. made me forget the plan momentarily. Now it is once more valuable. Get together with Martha and see if you can’t make a definite decision. Together you should be able to work it out.

We expect to be landing shortly, but no one knows exactly when. I imagine that our time will be pretty well occupied, not only with army affairs, but also with sightseeing, I hope. I’ll try to write, however.

Have you ever read Bob Benchley’s book, “Benchley Beside Himself”? If not, get a copy from the library if only to read the one chapter, “The Church Supper.” I know you will appreciate the humor of it.

Well, the sheet is filled.

Love,
Son

Letter 124, 1943-12-2 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 13-14

Dear Mother & Dad,

Our outfit has now reached North Africa in its travels, but we cannot reveal our exact location. I am feeling fine, really, and am enjoying my journey, seeing as many sights as possible. You know how much I always wanted to travel, so I’m not complaining in the least.

Please don’t worry about me. I know that merely saying that won’t satisfy you, but if you could be here with me you would be sure that I am O.K. Don’t let your imagination run wild, thinking me in all sorts of difficulties & trying situations, for that is far from the case. It is simply like moving about in the U.S. with the army, except that the scenery, people, houses, clothes, etc. are much different.

I hope the cablegram I am sending today won’t frighten you too much. I know what your
first thoughts will, but I wanted to assure you of my whereabouts, health & safety.

Love,
Son

Letter 125, 1943-12-2
MS026, box: 35 folder: 13-14

V-Mail
Dear Mother & Dad,

As I know you have already discovered because of the dearth of mail from me, I am now on my way across the Atlantic. I am free to say very little about the convoy, the route (even if I could figure out what it is), the destination (the final one still being unknown to us), or even the weather. However, I am writing a regular letter, adding to it daily, that I plan to send at a more propitious time, giving as many details as I feel I can.

I really am enjoying the trip, at least as much as one can under these conditions. I feared I might be seasick, but I have made out very well on that score. At times the sea has been fairly rough, but not enough to cause any trouble. I even have managed to do a little sun bathing, but the cool ocean breezes and the spray that occasionally dashes over the ship tend to cut down the time that can be enjoyably devoted [to] that. Unfortunately, we have seen very little marine life so far – only such things as porpoises, a black back that is reported to have been that of a whale, a flying fish, jelly fish and sea weed. Oh, yes, also some phosphorescent bodies that lighted the water as the boat churned them up one evening. No great oceanic marvels.

We have considerable leisure time, and, being well supplied with books, I am making the most of the opportunity. Mystery stories, plays, travel books – anything – the most reading I have done during a similar period of time since I left home. It's great to get back to the old habits again.

When you receive this note you will know that I have arrived safely, for it will not be mailed until we have left the ship.

Love,
Son

Letter 126, 1943-12-30
MS026, box: 35 folder: 13-14

V-Mail
Dear Mother & Dad,

Your letters are coming thru quite regularly now, covering the period of the first two weeks of December. As yet I'm not sure whether V-Mail or Air Mail is the quicker. The letters are arriving not at all consecutively. Today I heard from Aunt Grace. Will you tell her so? I'll write later, and tell her personally.

What is all this publicity about a tea wagon? I couldn't figure out what one you had donated. It certainly made the headlines, didn't it?
When – I've lost the thought that I started. Too many interruptions.
All of the detachment finally arrived here last night, and so, after several weeks, we are seeing each other again.
Undoubtedly you know much more about how the war is progressing than we do here. The rumors fly thick and fast about France being raided [?], Germany collapsing, etc. but none of these tales prove to be true. What I wouldn't give for a late edition of the New York Times right now.
Dad, you needn't worry about my not being able to read your V-Mail letters. They are very clear & it is great to hear from you.
Don't worry if my letters arrive spasmodically, for I can't write as often as I would like.
Love,
Son

Letter 127, 1943-12-30
Dear Mother & Dad,

At last I [am] beginning to make sense out of your letters, for your early letters are at last arriving to explain things that you referred to in later letters. Yes, Anne Buckley's [sic] name was given correctly in your notes and also the mention of Muriel & Marion's trip. The tea wagon episode is also very clear now that you have explained it.
I'm sorry you haven't yet comprehended my reason for bringing up that old issue of Mrs. Shiff's work in the newspapers. The type of thing is not in our papers, only particular ones in New York. Remember the decorative letters that the early illustrators used to begin and end their paragraphs with? She is now doing designing of that sort for some of the large concerns in the city, so Martha wrote and said. I hope she makes a success of her enterprise.
When I can arrange it, I am planning to send some money home. It probably will come by check from Washington, after a rather roundabout journey. I am carrying all together too much money on me and want you folks at home to have it. I also expect to have a monthly allotment taken from my pay to take the place of the payments you previously had been receiving. We apparently will have little or no use for all the money we are now receiving.

Love,
Son

Letter 128, 1943-12-31
Dear Mother & Dad,

Happy New Year! Another 365 days have rolled around again, and I'm farther from home than ever. Waves [?] in time, however. It can't be too long now, I hope. The weather is
much like the usual January weather at home, cold snappy temperature, brilliant stars and a crescent of a moon. No snow.

I have just learned that I am permitted to say I am in the Atlas Mountains. However, the elevation is nowhere nearly as high as I at first presumed, only about 1200 feet. The scenery is beautiful, though in a stark, rugged way. The hills rise quite abruptly from the valley where we are situated, and as you approach the top become steep and rocky. The view from the summit is superb, especially looking across the valley floor to the purple mountains arising in the distance. Today, as we were clambering about, a fog moved in slowly down the valley, covering all beneath with a snowy cloud, but leaving the distant peaks protruding above the mist, like islands rising out of the sea. (Poetic, what?)

Don’t forget the map I asked about. It would be especially good if it is quite detailed.

I have been on no shopping trips yet, but I have some ideas of what I would like to get. None of your packages have arrived as yet, but the others are not receiving them either. Received another letter from Dad today, but the quantity has been diminishing regularly.

Love,
Son

1944

January, 1944

Letter 129, 1944-01-01 (back to Table of Contents)

January 1, 1944 [3]

Dear Mother & Dad,

Because of the dearth of lights, we have difficulty evenings doing all we wish. Tonight we managed to salvage some grease from the kitchen, and by braiding some gauze for a wick, have constructed a crude but fairly adequate light. It flickers like the early movies, but serves its purpose. Poor Abe Lincoln. How he managed to read Porson Weem’s with only the aid of a blazing log is almost beyond my understanding. Even a mirror reflector doesn’t help much. If this continues, I’ll soon be ordering Sears-Roebuck glasses by mail.

We have our first P.X. today, and consequently I have decided I want some things from home. As can be expected the selection of items is quite meagre, though really good considering how far they have to be transported. Of course I have no idea what will be received in the next order, but I don’t believe they will change greatly. First of all, I will need V-Mail paper. Also plain envelopes with the glue protected so they will not seal. A fairly large waterproof container, something similar to a moisture proof tobacco pouch, for carrying little items I want protected from the rain. Another cheap dollar pen if you can manage it. A small cigarette lighter—find one that will wear well—nothing at all fancy—the smaller (within reason) the better. Slow burning candles or one large one made of several – not too large, however. (Definite, what?) Bulb for the pocket flashlight. I have plenty of reading material for a while, so do not send any books. I’ll probably need some later. Candy etc. to finish the box if there is room.
We could buy hard candy today & from your letters I infer that some of that kind is also on the way. Other kinds, such as Tootsie Rolls, which apparently carry well, would be appreciated. I'll let you decide the rest. Reading this over reminds me of the letters your grandfather sent home to your grandmother during the Civil War. I almost added “Choose a box which has thin boards so the box itself will not add too much weight.” Remember? Even his choice of foods would taste mighty good now.

This is the first air-mail letter I have sent since arriving in North Africa. Let me know how quickly it arrives.

I went on a short walk this afternoon over an area we had seen this morning. I have not had enough acquaintance with the buildings in this section to be able to judge their age, but visited some ruins of stone construction – use as yet unascertained. It is hidden off the main road in a wadi, hardly visible until almost on top of it. It might be an old dam, the ruins of a castle, fortifications, anything. I realize that this description give you a picture of practically nothing, but when I began to write it was the atmosphere of the scene rather than the actual situation itself that was so interesting. (I'll try again another time)

January 2, 1944 [3]

There was a white frost last evening, about the coldest weather we have had so far.

What a birthday anniversary. The day is now warm, but not nice enough to prefer this country to home. I guess George and I will have to wait another year before getting together again. But what is another year in my young life – and then we'll have another of those famous birthday celebrations.

The air here is so clear that distances are very deceptive. Looking across the valley the distances seem very small, but once you begin to hike the area you begin to realize your mistake. The small clumps of green that looked like bushes are really trees, usually large evergreens that are so abundant here. Even the narrow rock outcrops, showing the layers of sedimentary stone, stand out clearly on the distant mountain.

I believe that during our travels we passed through a section of the [censored] I know we are located comparatively near it now, and hope that it was [censored] we traveled over, merely for having the satisfaction of seeing the region. The fog that comes rolling down our valley every morning probably has its origin [censored]. Those who have climbed one of the highest peaks around here say they can see where the land levels off. I'm still sightseeing you see – a regular sucker for any and all travel folders.

Oh yes, in the package, include some lighter fluid & extra flints. Also some cocoa on the hike for flavoring drinks.

Don't be afraid of sending packages, for the longer I write & think about food the hungrier I become. Anything that will carry well and is edible. Food, food, and more food.

It's stunning how frequently TW asks for food. In VN food was readily available. Care packages from home were novelties, not necessities. But the real urgency of TW's requests made the homefront a real support for the troops in the field, not just a nice bit of icing. I'm wondering also whether the lack of food arises too from agricultural shortages like the dust bowl.

The quantity of mail has dimished [sic] rapidly during the last few days. It probably will rise again when the next ships dock. I wish all that mail you have said is on the way would put in its appearance.

I fear it may be quite some time before I can manage to get a leather cover for a package of cigarettes for me. Nothing very much and not at all what I wanted but I will keep it to
send home when I can some other kind of shopping. I am hoping to contact some of the Arabs wandering about the camp to get some of their native wares.

This must have been quite wild country before the army moved in. All the permanent homes here have narrow slits in the walls similar to the windows used for protection in the European castles. Almost like tiny fortresses isolated in the middle of the desolate country.

The Arabs have fantastic tents made of grass mats & cloth, supported by wooden ribs, with plenty of air holes for ventilation. They are shaped like the Hogans of the American Indians, but not so permanently constructed. We passed near one yesterday in order to get a better view and practically had to fight off the dogs that dashed out at us and snapped at our heels. The Arabs made no move to call them off, but simply gazed in our direction for a few minutes and then unconcernedly began to care for their beautiful horses. What food they live on I can't see, but apparently they spend their time bartering & tending flocks of sheep and herds of goats.

I am planning to include a 50 Franc note (worth about a dollar in American money) for your collection. I'll try to get some coins also and send them with my other purchases. I am not sure that I will be permitted to send the bill, but I understand it is permissible.

There are a great many more tales I would like to tell but censorship prohibits. I'll pass them along to you as soon as I can.

Love,
Son

Letter 130, 1944-01-03 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 15

V Mail

Dear Mother & Dad,

I have decided that I will not send the letter I wrote on the boat. Even though it is not exactly a daily account of our trip, I included so many censorable items that the version you would receive would be very unintelligible. I'll wait and let you read it when I return home.

Last evening I finally had an inspiration concerning the type of candy I would like to have included in the next package. Remember the individually wrapped squares of caramel made by Lofts? Well, that's my choice. Also anything else edible would be most enjoyable.

For the last few days the weather has been excellent – during the daylight hours. It reminds me of Indian Summer weather in early October minus our colored foliage. The hills apparently remain green all year, covered as they are with evergreens. I think you would enjoy the country here, for even at night in the moonlight the scenery is really nice. I do wish I had my camera here so you could better see how & where we are living. Maybe I'll try sketching. I know it won't be good, but at least I'll be trying.

We have received no letters for several days now, but I'm hoping that more will arrive soon. As yet, no packages. Our meals are much better than I expected they would be overseas, but the quantity is not yet sufficient. However, it is improving. Keep writing.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

Yesterday my turn came for going to town and you can be sure I jumped at the chance. It is about a two hours truck ride from the camp to the town itself, bumpy and dusty all the way, but rather interesting scenery. I managed to buy a few souvenirs – some native baskets and a pair of Arab shoes – and will mail them to you when the post office facilities become available. The leather shoes were really a bargain, quite the envy of all who have seen them. I believe they will fit either of you.

A Danbury paper came in yesterday’s mail, the first since arriving in Africa. The mail is coming in rather slowly, no packages as yet. The letters from Dad are coming through more regularly than those from Mother. However, four mail bags came today and that is to be distributed shortly.

The three main topics of conversation over here are food, light and showers – all apparently the most difficult things to obtain.

Wow! Two packages today. One from Miss Todd with that wonderful home made candy and a box of Mary Olivers from Esther Olson, I believe. I haven’t opened that one yet. I dove into it as if I had never seen candy before. The Christmas packages are at last beginning to arrive. You can send more packages of food, you doing the selecting, at any time.

Love,
Son

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V-Mail

No packages have arrived as yet, and very few letters for almost a week. However, a great deal of mail arrived in camp today, and so I expect something shortly. Don’t be afraid to send packages of food, for that is the one item we are sorely lacking. We do have good meals here, but with the exercise we are getting and the cold weather, the quantity is not sufficient. We’re not starving, by any means. It is just the little extras that are lacking.

The valley in which we are located is wrinkled with wadis or rain washed gullies that crease the area with an interlocking network of small valleys. They offer excellent concealment and are like little canyons of about a ten foot depth and a four foot width. It is almost like being on an exploring party as we follow the winding cuts that slice through the plowed fields. If you make a game of your army hikes and try to make yourself feel you are a traveler exploring a new country, and really do try to see and do as much as you can, the time goes much quicker and is quite enjoyable. The psychologists would call me an escapist, I suppose, but they say
everyone is slightly queer. The army isn't as bad as one might imagine. And so to bed. Good night.

Love,
Son

Letter 133, 1944-01-07 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 15

French North Africa

January 7, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Don't you find V-Mail inadequate for writing all you would like to write? I know I do. I'm planning to write an air mail letter along with the V-Mail whenever I find time.

I went to town yesterday for the first time since arriving in Africa and had a wonderful time. The two hour truck drive was rather tedious, but I had a fairly good observation point on top of a box of C-Rations. The rations are provided for eating in town in case we could not or did not want to buy our meal there. One of my main reasons for going was to get a good meal, so I am saving my cans for a future emergency.

As soon as we jumped off the trucks in town, each of us was surrounded by a cluster of Arab & French children offering to lead us to various and sundry amusements. Finally we managed to drive them off and escaped for a few minutes to do some sight seeing on our own.

Unfortunately most of the stores in town were closed. Why I have never been able to discover. Perhaps that is the usual custom. Perhaps they feared the usual weekend invasion of the soldiery. Of course I investigated the few shops that were open for business & did a little purchasing. After gesticulating and counting on my fingers I succeeded in buying some post cards (2 for 3 francs) and a French newspaper. Then my troubles began. I had no francs, only U.S. bills, and the only way they could make me understand the total price was to write it in figures. Then my sorrows grew, for the change poured back in the form of franc notes of various denominations (printed in Philadelphia, by the way) and centimes. No they didn't cheat me, but it took several valuable minutes for me to ascertain the fact. Then I had to go through the same process for the two fellows who were with me. Why couldn't you have taught me Italian when I was young? The citizens here are real linguists and most of them are proficient in at least two tongues. Those Americans of Italian extraction are quite at home here, for most speak that language as well as French. What else can be expected of an old Yankee family?

The few bakeries and candy shops were sold out almost immediately, the sweets bringing exorbitant prices. We did manage to get a part of a cake from some fellows who gave us a good sized sample while we were talking together on the street. The one grocery store open was jammed and a howling bedlam of noise. Apparently all humans suffer from the illusion that if one cannot understand a particular language he will clarify matters by shouting. Egad! It doesn't work. From bitter experience I know. Candles, about four inches long and a slate gray in color were going like hot cakes at 5 Francs apiece. Small boxes of candy cost well over a dollar. Before I could do any purchasing the proprietors began to pull down the corrugated
iron covers for the windows and doors and we were unceremoniously ushered out. I also tried one silver paper covered candy and it was terrible. A few did manage to buy some good cookies & I also had a taste of them. Apparently everything of that sort contains dates as well as the ordinary ingredients.

The best restaurants are French and it was to one of them we went in search of a meal. There was no menu and a sign on the wall, in English as well as French, informed us that all soldiers had to furnish their own bread. We took our chances & accepted what they brought to us. Soup, of undistinguishable brand, was served in typical French style, each filling his own dish from the tureen. Next came an omelet (sp.? – no one agrees about how it should be written) – an excellent omelet – in fact, the best part of the meal. Before the meal was completed we had ordered another. It was a pepper omelet, I believe, with small bits of green pepper sprinkled throughout. Wonderfully light and fluffy. Next came spaghetti and small steaks, probably beef but no one was sure. Apparently knives are not an important part of French cutlery, for they are not supplied and have to be especially sought after. After vain attempts to attract the attention of the buxom & scurrying waitress, I sheepishly extracted my jackknife from my pocket and used that in place of a steak knife. The others, perhaps not so boorish as I, refused my offers of the pocket knife and struggled on with their spoon as an anchor & sawed bravely on with the fork. Dessert was very simple – Tangerines served in a brown wicker basket. They were very tasty, probably having just come from the trees a day or two previously. The wine that is invariably served with all meals is not especially palatable to me, for it is not sweet but sour and bitter. Oh yes they did manage to find a slice of bread for each of us despite all the signs.

I managed to find a general store open and investigated that for souvenirs. Rather than go to the regular curio shops, and they do have them even in this part of Africa, I thought I would have more success in the stores accommodating the regular inhabitants. There was no haggling over prices there, for the cost was marked on each item. It was there that I bought two native baskets, nothing at all remarkable, to send to you.

I had brought a few packages of cigarettes & soap to town for trading in case the opportunity presented itself. These I had put in a small cloth bag along with my cans of rations, post cards, and newspaper. All were keenly interested in the contents, each hoping fervently that it contained soap, which is particularly scarce here, which I would wish to sell. I had brought it for bartering, not for selling, and so brushed away all prospective customers. However, more zealous seekers would dash up to me suddenly, grasp the bag & feel through from the outside, before I could withdraw it from their reach. Once I opened it to get a package of cigarettes which I traded for a short grass whip or quirt & then practically had to run down the street to escape from those who wanted to buy the contents. Some even offered to buy the bag and contents sight unseen.

The leather shoes I bought in an Arab shop. The proprietor was not the ordinary dirty, sneaky, cunning, untrustworthy fellows that surround the camp; but rather a very distinguished, middle aged man with a rather light & ruddy complexion, a neatly cared for beard and fine, even white teeth. The shop itself was very well cared for, shoes, hats, mats and all neatly arranged on the shelves. An American soldier who spoke Italian was bargaining for a rug and a real Oriental bargain bout ensued. Those present really enjoyed themselves, scowling at the appropriate time, shaking their heads despairingly to convince the prospective purchasers that he was driving a sharp bargain, and then became all smiles as the price was
suddenly and abruptly agreed upon. I asked the soldier to get the shoes for me, and, without bargaining long for he had to leave shortly & advised me to take them while he was still there to talk for me, beat him down 50 francs and bought them for 150 francs or $3.00. A real bargain let me assure you. You are expected to bargain with the Arabs, but if you can’t speak to them it is most difficult.

I am surprised to discover that many of the Arabs speak only Arabic and no other tongue, not even French.

Some of the fellows asked us to buy some brandy or cognac for them in town. Being very naive about liquors, I said I would do what I could but could promise nothing. At night, in the dark & dusk of the narrow alley ways we went out on a searching party. The bars are lighted at night and not much else. We went badly to the bars and asked for what we wanted, and, in signs and signals, were led to a partition and the end of the room. Suddenly bottles appeared & prices & labels etc. became the topic of conversation. I stood by while the others dickered. They decided prices were too high and off we set again. When they tried to lure us down a dark alley way, I suddenly got the idea. Shades of prohibition! The selling of quarts was illegal and had to be bootlegged! Egad! Stupid? Slow? I’ll say so. And inasmuch as I don’t drink the stuff myself what a fine fix I would have been in. Well, chalk it up to experience. I’m not up to bootlegging yet, especially behind closed doors and in dark streets in a foreign country – especially with M.P.s patrolling the streets.

We are not permitted to wander far from the area without hiking in groups of three, for the Arabs at times can be tricky. Today two of us walked just a little way from the camp area and decided to return. Despite all the orders to the contrary, the Arabs continue to gather about on Saturdays and Sundays for selling oranges, eggs, chickens and the like, and today they moved in by the tens and twenties, even on bicycles and beautiful horses. We stood on the hill, about seventy five yards from the road, and suddenly discovered the Arabs were closing in on us in a circle. One on horseback followed us no matter where we moved. Probably their intentions were most friendly and our suspicions were unfounded, but we took no chances. As nonchalantly as possible, we headed for the road, but at the time we felt we were in a tight fix.

Some of the trails over the hills here probably are native roads hundreds of years old. One that I have noted particularly winds up a steep hill in a rather steady but fairly slow grade. At the sections where the terrain did not permit the smooth path to continue, the cliff is banked with large stones forming a solid foundation for the road. From the top your eyes can follow the worn path across the valley and up through a pass in the hills on the other side where it disappears from view. At night it is a scene to be well remembered, for the worn path shines brightly in the moonlight. Remember Noyes “The Highwayman.” “The road was a ribbon of moonlight.”? How true that description is. And to think it probably is one of the most ancient of highways.

You asked about sending me books. No, don’t send any yet, for my barracks bag is pack jammed full now, and I have not had much time for reading. Probably in a little while I will have more opportunity and better weather for that sort of thing. How true are the observations of the historic geographers. When the weather is cold you just don’t feel like doing things just as when it is too warm your energy is sapped. I really am observing a great deal that will be most valuable when the war is over and I get back to studying. If I told you my varied & sundry observations, it would sound like a thesis on disjointed historical subjects, & prove invaluable,
you can rest assured of that. Despite the hikes, the food, the cold, the sleep, the comforts, I
honestly am not regretting the days over here. If we do eventually see action, I am sure this
approval of army travel will not then stand the test, but so far everything is O.K.
 Don't worry, keep up your spirits and I'll be home soon to tell you all about it. What I say
about this life here being valuable to me, I really mean.
 Write soon and often, even if my mail does not arrive regularly. I'll do my best to keep you
informed of my state of well being.

Love,
Son

Letter 134, stray letter (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 15
Stray letter here—apparently from much later—probably in Italy

Letter 135, 1943-11-01, (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 15

V-Mail

Dear Mother & Dad,

As yet I cannot tell whether V-Mail or air mail is he faster. Up to now V-Mail is coming
through much more quickly. Today I received your latest air-mail post-marked the 27th, while
the V-Mail from dad saying you had received my cablegram arrived last week. His was dated
the same. Yesterday the fruit cake from grandma arrived in the very best of condition though
it was a long time in transit. The other packages have not reached me yet. Thank grandma
for me (I'll write personally later) and tell her that as a sample of how much her cake was
appreciated, the time of consumption was about ten minutes. Every crumb is gone.

You asked for suggestions for filling another package. Your selections are always excellent,
but I'll give you a few. Peanuts – nuts – candy – sardines – dried apricots – well anything edible
that will transport readily.

If Morse had visited Africa he would have despaird of inventing anything quicker than the
Arab grape vine. Since our arrival here, their communication system must have really sizzled,
for they have been poring in by the dozens from all directions. Arabs of all types, sizes and
ages are thronging our camp area, trying to sell oranges, eggs, live chickens, date candy, nuts,
especially hoping to get soap or cigarettes in return.

A box will soon be on its way home to you, that is, when I can get it wrapped & estimate
the postage. I am rather hoping one of your card board boxes will come soon so I can use that.

Love,
Son

Letter 136, 1944-01-11 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 15
Dear Mother & Dad,

Well, I gave you warning enough. I told you that without a camera I would try a little sketching, and, despite my total lack of ability I began today. These are not good, as is very obvious, but they will give you some idea of the scenes we are seeing.

I am planning to send some baskets home, not because the workmanship is at all excellent but because baskets are so typical of the people here. Everyone carries them – all types and sizes – on their backs, on their heads, on the burros – Even in town the little young French girls carry them in place of hand bags.

If anyone should ask how a typical Arab dressed, I would be unable to answer. None dress alike. They are not suckers for style & modes of dress. They fashion their clothes from anything available – with the most surprising & unexpected results. Men with baggy trousers & the usual U.S. style coat & vest – children wearing discarded or stolen barracks bags – long robes made of the mattress covers we bring with us to fill with straw – and then finely made clothes of excellent material – regular Arab shoes of leather or grass – or regular G.I. shoes about six sizes too large. – hats of woven grass in the shape of a fez – turbans of cloth of all colors (I’ve even seen them made of Turkish towels) – some well made but most of them in tatters – regular Mohammedan Fezi symbols fo the wearer’s religion – Variety Non uniformity. That is the order of the day here.

I would like to learn more about the Arabs, especially their distribution and origin. Apparently they are the gypsies of North Africa and the Levantine, for they are seen wandering everywhere. They are the brigands of the region and thrive in their profession. It isn’t at all safe to wander alone at night as some of the visiting soldiers in this region have learned – but did not live to tell. They have even been known to kill truck drivers & steal the rations they were delivering; or kill a paymaster to obtain the pay roll. Not very pleasant fellows in the least. And the stolid mask covering their inner thoughts is not at all helpful. Consider the plight of us unarmed medics wandering through the woods at night with a potential cutthroat perhaps skulking behind the next stone pile, waiting to club us on the head. Egad! Despite my most pacific intentions & unbloodthirsty soul, I make sure to carry my knife in my belt. I probably would be too frightened to use it, but at least it supports my sagging spirits as long as I remain unmolested.

Nota bene: It really isn’t as dangerous as all this sounds. I still go forth with great temerity. This is just one of those little slips that pass in the night. I’ll try to write a decent, newsy V-Mail letter tonight also.

Bon soir,

Love,
Son
Letter 137, 1944-01-19 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 15

V-Mail January 19, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I finally mailed the package today and so you can be expecting it any month now. It probably will take several weeks to reach you, for parcels travel very slowly. Whenever you mail me a package be sure the box is strong and has plenty of paper & cord; for I expect to use them for returning souvenirs. Jim might like the leather cigarette case I included, so you can remail that to him if you wish.

Letters are not arriving at all well. The latest I have received is the one from dad saying you had received my cable. All letters received since that time were mailed earlier.

Remember my writing that I wanted some information on the Arabs? Well, I have found a good introductory book on the subject by Philip K. Hitti, one of the foremost authorities on Arabian history. It is one of a series of Armed Service Editions published by the “Council on Books in Wartime, Inc.” which issues small editions of some of the very best books. They are even smaller than the Pocket Books and have a better selection of titles – even some of the latest books as well as the classics. They are issued free to the fellows if you can manage to get your hands on them. I have one or two, and have seen a great many other titles I know I would enjoy if I could find time to read them.

Love,
Son

Letter 138, 1944-01-15 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 15

V-Mail January 15, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Another Saturday afternoon and a few minutes for writing.

About a week ago I sent home $280 that had accumulated in my money belt. Part of it was the money I had carried with me back to Fort Sam and the rest was unspent army pay. We have very little to spend money for over here and so you can expect a similar check (but of a smaller amount!) every month – or whenever we are paid. Use it just as you did the allotment you previously received. However, be sure to tell me when each one arrives so I can check on it.

No, my wallet is still in good condition, so do not send me the Mildred gave me. Jim sent me one of black leather and I am planning to use his for holding any extra stamps, papers, etc. I wish to have with me. I’m already well supplied you see.

Your Christmas card arrived yesterday. A long time on the way, but it arrived at last. I also received a birthday card from the Committee of 100 Women, a couple of days ago. Also cards from Mary Anita, Mr. & Mrs. Robertson & Mr. & Mrs. Skiff and Eleanor Liefeld. What is Mildred’s home address? You have never given it to me.

Planning for future events, I thought of some other items you might send me. I’ll just list them off – a tightly packed package of tea – large bars of chocolate (Nestle’s or similar brand)
– Nestle’s cocoa with a little sugar added – and – a bottle of ink – hard crackers that would not crack too readily – any other foodaments with which you can fill the box. Quite a variety but good I expect. I’ll write again tomorrow.

Love,
Son

Letter 139, 1944-01-16

V-Mail

Dear Mother & Dad,

Last evening I held my own individual Christmas party and was just as excited as if it were being held at the regular time. Six packages arrived yesterday evening, from the class at school. You made some very excellent choices, especially the pocket books and candy and nuts, and cake. The large cellophane package of nuts is already gone and one of the cakes. The rest is stacked under my cot awaiting the first signs of hunger pangs. Potato sticks – wonderful. Figs – I’m saving to carry on hikes. Well, I just can’t mention everything item by item, but you know how highly I always recommend you as a packer of good boxes. By the way, the parleys tended to harden but still are very, very edible. The package from college was most peculiar – some hard candy, a slice of fruit cake, a package of razor blades, a pencil - ? ? – all packed in shredded paper in the same size box as you used.

If I have an opportunity I will look up Donald Robinson. I’m sure I don’t remember him at all, but inasmuch as his regiment is just a few hundred yards down the road I may run across him. I don’t get around much in that area, however. Your letters written on Christmas eve and Christmas day came in today’s mail.

Love,
Son

Letter 140, 1944-01-21

Dear Mother and Dad,

At last your letters are catching up with me, ten letters from various people coming yesterday. V-Mail is the quickest method, a letter of yours dated January 6 being one of the latest arrivals along with an air mail of the 28th. Also heard from Jim B., Martha, & Divvy.

I was very sorry to learn about Aunt Annie’s death, but from the tone of your previous letters the news was not unexpected. What is Uncle Thede planning to do now? It must be terrifically hard from him to accustom himself to his new situation. I should imagine that Louise or one of the other children will probably stay with him for the time being. Give him & Jennie etc. my condolences. It is not much to offer in the way of sympathy, but what else can
I'm enclosing a franc note that one of the fellows got when we were in Casablanca, also a five franc note from Algeria and a gold seal dollar bill of the type used in occupied countries. Do you know of any particular coins or bills you want for your collection? If so, let me know, and I'll see what I can do for you.

My three memories of this country at night prob. will be the piercingly bright stars, the enormous yellow moon, and camp fires. At night little spots of light are scattered over the landscape, either shining out of the Arab homes or simply from camp fires about which the nomad Arabs are gathered for warmth. When you approach you can pick out the white robed figures crouching about the flames and even see the inevitable baskets in which they carry their supplies. The Arabs are a strange people – wandering about, with apparent aimlessness, leaving burning embers to show their path.

I'm making out pretty well in regard to the news, for every day we receive a copy of "Stars and Stripes," a very excellent four page sheet. The news is very up to date and unbiased I hope. Of course it is selected and thus can be perverted, but I feel it is quite on the up and up. We receive news only about a day late which is really fine. It pertains mostly to war news, especially first hand reports from Italy by Ernie Pyle, a few items of national import, local sports news, "Lil Abner" comic strip, good information about the various war fronts and various little squibs. I even read about Ida Tarbell before your letter arrived. Really not bad – and all for 1 franc per copy.

Headquarters company with which we are quartered has a radio that picks up the re-broadcasts for the American expeditionary station. I can hear Bing Crosby now, vibrating his tonsils in the next tent. I don't get to hear it often but I really enjoy it when I do. Even Fred Allen was on the other night, as well as broadcasts from various local stations. I honestly hear more decent broadcasts than I did at Gruber & Fort Sam – no more of that hilly billy & cowboy stuff.

Oh, yes, Stars and Stripes is now beginning to publish the Reader's Digest, about thirty pages a week. By the end of the month we will have the entire January issue. Very convenient for it comes in supplementary sheets that are folded out to the size of the normal magazine page.

Can you get me some (1) Pantatomic-X (FX 135) or (2) t-X –PX-135 or (3) Super. XX 135 – all 135 millimeter film. Kodak 35 is the easiest way to designate the type. Any of the three films is O.K. One of the fellows has a good camera here, but needs films. He has sent for some and will let me use the camera also if I get the film. It is similar to movie film & I would like to have some snaps to send home.

I'm sorry also to learn about Mrs. Jenkins. If you are talking to Dr. Jenkins or Ward give them my sympathy.

I'm still reading about the Arabs and am finding some fascinating material, especially concerning early Arabian work in the philosophy of history. Not much information, just a mention of the author and the value of his work. Not much known, either. If you suddenly receive a strange list of books and authors, don't worry. It will just be a bibliography I wish to preserve for future reference.

In regard to the matter written about at Gruber, if it is not clear to you, write and explain how you would like to have it accomplished. I can follow upon your instructions in that matter, you know, without any difficulty.
January 23, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

At last your letters are arriving in numbers, the latest so far having the date of January 9th, thus taking only thirteen days in transit. I hope mine are coming through even more quickly.

What is it about an 8 oz. package? Is that the only kind you are permitted to send. If so, forget all those orders for edibles I have been sending. Otherwise, keep them coming. Do try to send the V-Mail paper if possible, however, for I have only seven sheets left. However, we have been receiving free about three sheets a week, so that will help expand my supply. I also have a good number of air mail envelopes as well as two books of air mail stamps. Of course I intend to use them, too, but little messages on the V-Mail travel much more quickly. Also if you can buy paper similar to this, send it along.

I received a note from Fran Austin yesterday, saying he had tried to call me but the call couldn’t go through. I have his address but have no idea of what city he is located in. However, I intend to search about a bit and perhaps I will be able to uncover the place at which he is stationed. I feel it can’t be too far from here and thus hope to be able to see him. If his mother has any further information of his whereabouts, let me know.

Tell me the complete address of Donald Robinson, his rank, company, etc. A regiment is a big outfit in which to locate one person, but if I have more information perhaps I can find him.

It apparently is the market season for sheep. On the road this morning we passed several flocks of sheep, all in all probably numbering several thousand head, being herded toward town. The large flock was divided into several smaller ones, each unit being guided by three or four Arabs. The usual beautiful sheep dogs were missing. Instead, the herders guided the flock by throwing their staffs at leading sheep to drive them either right or left. According to the Texas boys, they mark their sheep just as they do back in the states – with painted brands on the sheep’s backs. These particular ones had bright red markings.

I’ve never told you much about the homes in this region besides mentioning the tents of the nomads. The Arabs also have small stone houses with grass roofs as well as strangely shaped affairs that rise like mounds out of the ground, constructed of earth, stones, grass and whatever else is available. Many are dug into banks along the road side and are completely camouflaged from above. The only wall of human construction is the front, the others being the earth walls. Many homes, however, are quite extensive affairs, the house proper forming one side of a square and a thick stone wall making the other three sides that bounds the courtyard. The barns, forges, etc. are placed along these walls, leaving the center free for various activities as well as for the horses, chickens, etc. to wander freely about. The walls are pierced with narrow slits to provide outlets for protecting weapons. The gates are thick wooden affairs and at times the doors to the homes are iron, with iron gratings over the...
windows. Apparently the Arab uprisings I have read about are the real things.

I simply can't find time to write, even to Martha. When I have an afternoon off I try to read a little as well as write you folks a letter, and then the time is gone. Please explain if anyone asks. I'll try to do better later. For the meanwhile, just tell them the news, what little there is of it.

I'm enclosing a clipping from “Stars & Stripes.” You can see they even have a poets corner.

I went to church this morning and there was a fairly large congregation. Disagreeing with so many of the various church policies, I've often wondered why I continued to attend services. Well, I guess I've found the answer, and a simple one it is too. It merely is because, no matter how poor the service or ill the sermon, if you personally do some thinking on your own hook, you find that it acts something like a personal pep talk to your own system. Agree or disagree with little details, it at least sets you to thinking about your personal philosophy of life, and that is what religion really means to me. Services are just little reminding guide posts. Please don't get the impression that the church services here are poor, for often they are far above average. I'm just thinking of services & sermons in general.

I just had some forbidden fruit, dates bought from the Arabs. They are most excellent and inasmuch as I am only an accessory after the fact, for I had nothing to do with the purchasing myself, I found them most enjoyable. We also are receiving a fair number of native grown oranges, for which I am most humbly thankful.

Love,
Son

Letter 142, 1944-01-24 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 15

January 24, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

We supposedly are on a problem, but inasmuch as little or nothing is happening, I'm taking a few minutes to dash off a short note.

We are sitting in a rugged rocky ravine, mostly sleeping, but I have been reading the book of modern short stories you included among my Christmas gifts. A very good collection. You might even buy another copy of that as well as the Pocket Book of Short Stories and have them available for me when I return. As soon as I am finished with the volumes I have with me, I pass them on for someone else to read. After being banged about in my pockets for a number of days, they are not a very presentable sight.

I just heard sheep bleating nearby & on investigation in a lower level of the ravine found an Arab and a very young child herding a flock. They direct them with a strange sound that resembles the German “ch,” deep in their throats. (“g”)

How much this region reminds me of the Biblical lands. The Arab conquerors of this region originated in an area adjacent to Palestine and consequently the dress and customs are very similar, even to the same robes with hoods. The Biblical metaphors and similes are easily understood now. Though they may seem picturesque to us, the authors simply were using
items of everyday familiarity – the flock, the sheep – the pines – sand – camels – water – the

Woops, another Arab lad is arriving from above with a herd of cattle, bringing them to the
ravine for water. They just wander about the country side, picking the most likely spot for
eating or sleeping, and then move on again.

You probably remember illustrations of a pastoral scene, showing a shepherd & his flock
outlined against a hazy blue sky just at twilight. While hiking the other evening, I saw a similar
scene myself, and really picturesque it was too. The sky was a Maxfield Parrish blue, while the
outlined shapes of both men and animals was a bluish black that merged with the color of the
silhouetted hill. Sounds like a paragraph from a travel folder, doesn’t it?

Our latest issued fatigue clothes have large patch pockets, located in the shirt just as those
in a regular shirt, while those in the trousers are almost opposite the hip bones. I’ve heard
many complaints about them because the pockets, being so large, the owner practically has
to stand on his hands to reach the bottom of the voluminous holds. I agree at first with these
dissenting voices, but at length I have become dissuaded from their point of view. As you are
most aware I like to carry innumerable items on my person, and thus have always had need for
good sized containers. These serve the purpose well. Just to sample some of the contents, just
let me list a few I have today – several handkerchiefs, a wallet, another wallet for small papers etc., and extra pair of socks, sunglasses, several pencils as well as my eversharp, a fountain pen, two pocket books (Short Stories & “The Arabs”), a notebook, writing paper, a jack knife & the tiny compass you sent from home, a nail file & comb, toilet paper, two packages of hard candy, and room left for a great deal more.

I attempted to transpose myself self into the minds of the early cave dwellers the other
night while sitting huddled against a stone bank, watching the light from a small fire kindled
in a corner of the ravine flicker across the irregular face of the wall. Always experimenting
with the sights and sounds and sensations you see. However with the historic always in mind,
I did want to find what effect fires in the caves does have on man. What did I discover? Not
a darned thing except that these primitive men certainly must have instinctively appreciated
the value of that unknown power as they crouched around the flames. It gives you a feeling of
protection & well being that even the knowledge that it acted as a protection against preying
animals would not accomplish. Just the presence of the fire itself is sufficient. No wonder
these men at times became worshippers of fire. Perhaps Loki himself grew out of a feeling of
this sort. Even dabbling in folk lore, too, you see.

Today I discovered another occupation of the people here. Certain areas are forested with
large pines and today I saw several Arabs cutting these trees & planning them into definite
sizes. These trees are also tapped for the gum & clay containers, similar to our flower pots in
shape & size, are fastened to catch the drippings. When I first came here, I found the remains
of one of these pots near our area and thought I had accidentally uncovered a piece of native
pottery. I was secretly excited over my find until the next day I found piles of them stacked
along the roadside. No archeological finds as yet.

This is really strange country, for you can quickly move from one type of vegetation to
another. It is easy to see how the desert slowly changes to arable land. Where we are now
the ground is practically barren except for a few tufts of grass here & there and the good sized
pines. A few miles up the valley the tufts are most numerous & close together & near our
bivouac area for sized bushes put in their appearance. Down the valley further the land is
simply rolling, with none of the hills here and then I presume it merges into the desert.
   Today's travel lecture is over. To be continued at another time.

   Love,
   Son

   I've just been rereading the letter I wrote in the field. Pretty stupid, isn't it? I really should
not mail it, but just to give you an idea of my mental disintegration & wanderings, I'll include
it this time. The next one of a similar vein will probably draw a protest from you.
   I heard from Francis Austin, somewhere in this section, and am writing to him today. I
hope I may be able to see him soon, but I fear that may be impossible.
   I'm planning to write a V-Mail letter today also. That, of course, should arrive long before
this.

   Love,
   Son

Letter 143, 1944-01-27 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 15

V-Mail
Dear Mother & Dad,
   Don't be surprised to receive more than one letter of this date, for I am attempting to catch
up on my neglected correspondence. Your latest letter to arrive is that of the 11th. Yesterday
the package of books came also.
   At long last I heard from Jim Gallagher. He now is in an infantry division and appears to
have an excellent position. Also received a X-mas card from Ralph & Lucy, still in Norfolk and
thriving on the cream of the land I presume.
   If you know the address of any of the fellows now located in this region, be sure to give
them to me won't you? – Dick Rice, Jack Gilbert etc. I might be able to look them up. I want
to see Fran Austin, who is stationed somewhere near here, but so far I can't uncover the name
of the city in which he is located.
   Please explain to Phebe, etc. why I haven't written as yet. Time just isn’t available. I hope
she will understand.
   Don't worry & keep your chins (collective) up. Write again soon.

Love,
Son

Three post cards from Sidi-Bel-Abbes.

Letter 144, 1944-01-27 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 15

January 27, 1944
Dear Mother & Dad,

A short note. I'll write a longer one later today if time permits.

I'm including in this note some cards I bought in Sidi Bel-Abbes when I visited there. They give you a fair idea of what the Algerian cities look like. We had a good time while there, and it was there that I bought the souvenirs that I sent home. I do hope they have arrived by now.

Also, I'm including a franc note for your collection.

I'm free now to tell you more about the places I have visited but I'm quite busy and can't go much into detail now. Look up any articles about French Morocco and Algeria in the National Geographic magazine & they will help picture for you the type of country I have been seeing – Casablanca – Tlemcen – Sidi Bel-Abbes – etc. The travelogue will come later when time permits.

I'm sending Martha a card & franc note today and also a card to Grandma & Ed. You do my duty for me, won't you? And tell them what I have been doing –

Love,
Son

Letter 145, 1944-01-31 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 15

V-Mail

January 31, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Your letters of the 12th & 17th arrived tonight. The mail is coming through very well now. You asked about censorship. All of our mail is censored but none of yours is. All your letters come through absolutely unopened. Incidentally, has much been censored in my letters? I know about the last few weeks but before then I am not at all sure. Do not send me any more books for the time being. My barracks bags are so pack jammed now that I don't know how to manage. Several others are helping me by carrying a good many of my books with them. If I had more time to read I would be through with my travelling library in very little time, but as it is now, I'm only reading spasmodically. Be sure to keep “The Return of the Native.” I'll let you know when books become scarce.

Remember the large blanket pins I used while hiking in the mountains? If you can locate them (perhaps in my haversack), send them along when it is convenient. Perhaps you may be able to buy a half a dozen or so, but I imagine they are very scarce now.

If I could tell you what city I am near you would know where I am. That is just what we are not permitted to reveal. Trac the Atlas Mts. Extend over all N. Africa. Keep guessing. Love, Son

Letter 146, 1944-01-31 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 15

V-Mail

January 31, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Is meat still being rationed at home? Let me assure you that it isn't here – at least in the
pork line. I've eaten more pork chops, pork hash, pork stew, pork “hamburg” and pork in every other conceivable form during the past week or so than I would have in months home. However, I won't complain, for it certainly is much better than Spam, which the makers of Spam insist isn’t “luncheon loaf.” I certainly never expected that meat, of all commodities, would be here in such abundance. The meals really are not bad at all. Incidentally, we had a most exotic change in the menu the other day – gazelle, which some of the officers had shot in a recent hunting trip in the Sahara region. Very good it was, too, slightly gamey like venison, but very tasty. It also tasted slightly, very slightly, like liver. Now, of course, you have no idea of what it is really like.

You probably recall my saying that the weather was rainy when we first arrived in this bivouac area. However, since the rainy season is over now and spring is following closely behind. The days are very much longer, and when the sun has been out long enough to dispel the frost of the night it is really most hot. I would hate to be here during the summer. Even now the ground is becoming powdery dry and the insects are beginning to crawl about. To be cont.

Love,
Son

February, 1944
Letter 147, 1944-02-01 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 16-17

V-Mail

February 1, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I believe I wrote that my watch had stopped. Fortunately I found a watch maker in one of the companies and [xxxxx] tightened and cleaned and now it is running again as good as new.

You will be receiving another package one of these days. I bought a carved but unfinished box in xxxx and have already got it off in the mail. Dad can either varnish or wax it and I think you will find it rather nice. Perhaps wax would be the better method. I'll let you decide.

I had wanted to see xxxxxxx xxxx, the imposing fortress on a steep hill overlooking the harbor but time did not permit. I heard that it is the basis for the locale of “The Count of Monte Cristo.” Perhaps I can get back again some time and do all the sightseeing I would like.

Fran probably will be writing home to his folks saying that I was able to get in touch with him. You might keep in touch with them.

Warm weather is really here now. The rolling fields are all plowed and many of the crops have already started to grow. This must have been an excellent supply base for France before the war intervened. I certainly would like to be here when the crops have reached the edible stage. Always thinking of food!

Love, Son
Letter 148, 1944-02-06

V-Mail

Dear Mother & Dad,

I had a home town gathering in xxxxxxxxxx a few days ago. I managed to get in to Oran to visit Fran Austin at the hospital at which he is working and also bumped into two other fellows from home, Gilbert Nichols and Ted Ahlgren from Jefferson Avenue. I spent several hours with Fran and really had a great time, not only talking over old times but also seeing the work he is doing. He is now a T/4 and works in the physio-therapy ward, helping the fellows in regaining the use of their muscles after their wounds have healed. He is doing very interesting work and is very well liked by those with whom he is associated. He likes his job but really is not satisfied. As a matter of fact, who is? The head nurse was a Miss Warner from Missouri who helped show me about some of the other wards. I had an excellent opportunity for talking with some of the wounded who have recently returned from the Italian front, and learned a great deal about the fighting as well as the medical work being done there. Those fellows really are getting excellent medical care, and the xxxxxxxxxxxxxx wounds that I saw had healed wonderfully. I wish everyone would have the opportunity of seeing those fellows before going to the fighting zone. I’m glad I did. It relieves a great deal of the worry about the dangers of war wounds.

Love, Son

February 6, 1944

Letter 149, 1944-02-06

Dear Mother & Dad,

Just finished reading “Lost Horizon.” A very excellent fantasy with some ideas for stimulating thought about the outcome of the world war. I hope it won’t destroy everything so that it will depend on a few cultured souls shut away from the rest of the world to carry on. A good quote (most evident but well said) “Laziness in doing stupid things can be a great virtue.”

The only way you can get a real idea of the small towns over here is to amble thru’ them leisurely. Just riding thru’, they all look like filthy little villages. However, I have had a few chances to stroll around a bit and find them most interesting. The main street is lined with nice homes, the doors of which open directly to the side walk. I’ve had only a glimpse into the better homes and they seem excellently well furnished. Very fancy net curtains are used at the windows of all the homes and shutters with very close slats shut in practically all light at night. A town of this sort looks absolutely deserted at night, with only an occasional glimmer slipping thru. The side walks are laid out in designed squares about six inches on a side. The side streets usually are not paved and the side walks, where there are any, are of dirt. The town itself usually extends only about two blocks deep on each side of the main thoroughfare. The French live on the main street while the Arabs live in the other sections. The Arab shops are small little rooms with just a few choices of merchandise. And don’t think the Arabs, old
and young, are not intelligent. You can't beat them in a deal. I bought a few oranges today just to see what the ner[?] shops are like. In another I found Ali Babba's brother, with dark beard & piercing eyes, conducting business in the shadows with only an oil lamp for light. Only a very few items are on the shelves and it is difficult to distinguish even what those are. Not much to buy and very few articles I would want to even carry away.

Some post cards are on the way and I'll get some more off to you when I can get what I want.

Love,
Son

TW seems to be thinking a great deal about the impending combat in these letters.

Letter 150, 1944-02-06 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 16-17

February 6, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I have excluded the censorable sections from this letter and have jotted a few of those facts down in another letter which I shall send at another time.

Get yourself a good map and some descriptive articles from the National Geographic concerning French Morocco and Algeria and you will get some impression of the type of scenery and people I have seen since arriving in North Africa.

Certain sections of Morocco remind me strongly of scenic paintings by Grant Wood and Peter Hurd. No, they are not alike, but the distant view of plowed fields of browns and tans and creams & greens, looking like smooth even colored, patch work quilted ground, gives the Grant Wood impression. Also, the closely trimmed grape vines look like his stylized corn fields in our middle west. When coming close to the hill, they look like the background Hurd uses in his western scenes. In some regions the hills meet in steep gorges similar to those found in our Smokies, and the farmers apparently find the same difficulty in planting, plowing and harvesting their grapes.

Some regions made me dream of what I thought Tibet must be like. I suppose this feeling was merely the resulting sum of many impressions – the cold, wet weather, the high mountain vallies, the cloud capped hills, often without one tree in sight, grass tepees, mud homes, primitive wooden plows, women washing clothes in the river, scrubbing them on the rocks, rocky gorges, natives wrapped in wood robes attempting to keep warm while tending their cattle & sheep, people dressed in anything available, some with shoes, many without. The whole region was a study in contrasts, very modern, yet very ancient. A very well constructed French home would suddenly be visible in all this primitive country, a rail road wound in and out of the hills, through innumerable tunnels, a wide cement road was available for automobiles while the native still used narrow, winding paths, using heavily laden burros for transportation. Though some areas reminded me of the White Mts above tree line, much of the same section was fertile, boasting of excellently productive mountain vallies with much green grass, flowers, orange groves and even occasional palm trees, often many streams.

I suppose the Tibetan picture was made complete by the cluster villages that at times were
visible, on distant barren peaks, glistening yellow and clean in the sunlight. Almost a Shangri La – from the distance.

I also remember distinctly the ruins of a white stone church standing staunchly by itself in an isolated region. The graves that surrounded it were still made visible, though no mounds were present, by a ring of field stone that enclosed each individual’s last piece of real estate.

The city of Taza is a city high in the hills of Morocco that you come upon most suddenly and unexpectedly. Whenever troops appear the natives swarm about, attempting to sell oranges, pecans and even fresh eggs. I would have enjoyed spending more time in this region.

You would be surprised to see how suddenly one can leave a mountainous region and hit the desert. It just appears from nowhere. Where the hills were green and fertile they unexpectedly become white and sandy, the vegetation is most scarce and because of the soil the water has cut deep, sharp gorges. Those who have visited the west tell me that it reminds them of Montana & Wyoming with the high, blue hills in the distance like the Rockies in America.

The railroads, as well as the highways, are well constructed. The road bed is reinforced with small rocks that have been hand chopped by the natives. Well might we learn a lesson from the railroad stations that are found here, for no matter how desolately situated, the stations themselves are well constructed and kept in excellent condition. Compare those in the small towns in the U.S.

Often times the natives use the railroad as a guide for their own roads, which are about four feet wide, cleared of the scattered tufts of grass and marked here and there with large stones. I saw no farming whatsoever in this desert region but apparently cattle & sheep raising is used to some extent. The homes look like clumps of dead bushes and probably that is just what they are made of. An indication of the life of the nomad was most evident here, for along the native roads one could often pick out neat circles of stones that had been used to hold down the edges of their tents.

One of the most beautiful spots I have seen since I have been here is the region around Tlemcen in the Tlemcen Mountains. The city is built on the side of a hill, of well constructed homes, in the midst of a most productive region for growing olives and oranges and grapes. But the high spot of the area is the U shaped valley, the sides of the hills which form it having about an 80° degree angle. It is so steep that the railroad and the road make no attempt to cut directly across the valley but follow the edge of the valley, cling precariously to the edge of the cliff. A long waterfall drops from the top of the cliffs to the valley below and I presume it must be considered one of the beauty spots of the region. I know it had all of us agog.

Also nearby were vast ancient fortifications, consisting of a high wall with towers at regular intervals. It was the protection that walled in the city that hundreds of years ago flourished there. The past wasn’t always peaceful either, was it? I understand that there are many similar remains throughout this section but the only other one I have seen has been that at Magenta, a small village I have seen several times. The wall there is especially well preserved.

More sights and tales at another time.

Love,
Son

Six postcards accompany this letter—one a caricature of Hitler as a hyena, with Mussolini and Togo as monkeys.
Dear Mother & Dad,

It has been several days now since I have been free to write to you and so I know you have begun to worry. Well, don’t. I’m safe and sound, but riding about on the sea was not especially conducive to letter writing. For the first time I was really on the verge of sea sickness, but those days are past now and we are once again on terra firma. In a few days I shall be permitted to tell you the name of the region to which we have been transferred, but in the meantime just guess and you probably will guess correctly.

I received 27 letters and an 8 oz. package in yesterday’s mail and consequently I am still attempting to absorb all the news. A December 15th newspaper came today but no magazines. Now I have great numbers of letters to answer, but I am waiting until I can write more freely before trying to write any replies. You will be hearing from me shortly, when I shall tell you as much as I can. However, don’t expect mail at all regularly from now on and consequently don’t worry if my letters are infrequent. Love, Son

350th has apparently been shipped from North Africa to Italy.

Dear Son:-

To-day is Valentine’s Day and I wonder where you are and what you are doing. It is raining to-night so the snow won’t last long. Hope it doesn’t freeze after this rain as you know I don’t like the ice. They has a covered dish supper down at Church to-night but thought I rather stay home. Don’t know whether I told you before that they had fixed the floor in the Sunday School room so they could play shuffle board and other games. Hamilton has charge of the Scouts now so know they will have a good troupe. Jean is taking organ lessons from Mr. Gallagher. Can you picture her playing the organ? Jan [?] wouldn’t be able to see her. I owe everybody letters so guess that is why I don’t receive any mail. You are the only one I have written to lately so guess I better get busy. We received a war bond the other day which makes two they have sent since you have been away. It seems as if they are very slow getting them out. Frank Repole’s Mother bought the house at the corner of Division and George St. She have moved in; the rooms upstairs is where Merritt’s lived. Am glad you were able to visit Francis. Hope you keep well and if you need anything be sure and let us know. Take good care of yourself and hope you will be home very soon. Lots of love

Mother & Dad

Letter 151, 1944-02-18 (back to Table of Contents)
V-Mail

February 18, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

It has been several days now since I have been free to write to you and so I know you have begun to worry. Well, don’t. I’m safe and sound, but riding about on the sea was not especially conducive to letter writing. For the first time I was really on the verge of sea sickness, but those days are past now and we are once again on terra firma. In a few days I shall be permitted to tell you the name of the region to which we have been transferred, but in the meantime just guess and you probably will guess correctly.

I received 27 letters and an 8 oz. package in yesterday’s mail and consequently I am still attempting to absorb all the news. A December 15th newspaper came today but no magazines. Now I have great numbers of letters to answer, but I am waiting until I can write more freely before trying to write any replies. You will be hearing from me shortly, when I shall tell you as much as I can. However, don’t expect mail at all regularly from now on and consequently don’t worry if my letters are infrequent. Love, Son

Letter 152, 1944-02-14 (back to Table of Contents)

Feb. 14, 1944

Dear Son:-

To-day is Valentine’s Day and I wonder where you are and what you are doing. It is raining to-night so the snow won’t last long. Hope it doesn’t freeze after this rain as you know I don’t like the ice. They has a covered dish supper down at Church to-night but thought I rather stay home. Don’t know whether I told you before that they had fixed the floor in the Sunday School room so they could play shuffle board and other games. Hamilton has charge of the Scouts now so know they will have a good troupe. Jean is taking organ lessons from Mr. Gallagher. Can you picture her playing the organ? Jan [?] wouldn’t be able to see her. I owe everybody letters so guess that is why I don’t receive any mail. You are the only one I have written to lately so guess I better get busy. We received a war bond the other day which makes two they have sent since you have been away. It seems as if they are very slow getting them out. Frank Repole’s Mother bought the house at the corner of Division and George St. She have moved in; the rooms upstairs is where Merritt’s lived. Am glad you were able to visit Francis. Hope you keep well and if you need anything be sure and let us know. Take good care of yourself and hope you will be home very soon. Lots of love

Mother & Dad

Letter 153, 1944-02-20 (back to Table of Contents)
Dear Mother & Dad,

Will you send me Jack Gilbert’s address? Also, if she has been able to discover it, ask his mother about where he is located—fairly definite region.

Please don’t be worried if mail doesn’t arrive as regularly as it has been up to now, for our training is keeping us very busy. Still climbing mountains and shivering in the cold, but it really isn’t too bad. Also still giving shots and that sort of thing, so all in all our time is pretty well used up.

I’m glad you sent those snaps along, even though you felt they really weren’t the very best. The one of dad and the cat is very good and those of mother, dad, grandma & Mildred by the car are not bad at all. Incidentally, I like those snappy felt hats. They really are very nice.

The second series of packages has not yet begun to arrive, but some will undoubtedly be coming before too long. For heaven’s sake don’t send me any soap. I have about twenty pounds of the stuff in my barracks now. At least it seems that way. I have practically the heaviest, biggest, bulkiest bag in the division and even though I pare it down on every move, I only seem to reduce it in proportion to the others. However, I have been able to get the contents of two barracks bags down to the size of one.

I still can’t tell you much about what we are doing, but soon I’ll be free to tell you about the sights. Mighty interesting country.

See if Divy knows where Jim Warburton is stationed. I found his name in one of the books the Red Cross furnishes in some of their buildings scattered throughout this region. One volume is provided for each state and I found several fellows from home listed there. Another was Jerry Reynolds – remember him. They both are in this section of the world, but exactly where I can not be certain.

You know I like those packages, so keep them coming. It is difficult to say exactly what to send but here are a few hints. Tootsie Rolls (they make a 5¢ size now, you know), caramels similar to ones Martha sent, cocoa (Nestles with sugar added), nuts, parlays (someone surreptitiously appropriated part of the other box), dried fruit etc. You fill the box as best you can. [note penciled in: Nuts, tootsie rolls, caramels mailed 3/7/44—Date stamped in Danbury P.O.]

The army is providing us with various supplies that previously we had to supply ourselves. Right along with our regular rations at meal time we receive such items as life savers, gum, candles, shoe-strings, cigarettes, matches and also, I understand, razors and soap. Very generous I must admit.

If you would like to read some well written articles about the soldiers life in the present war, buy the recently published book of Ernie Pyle. He has a daily column in “Stars & Stripes” and is the one writer whose work I have read so far that gives a good picture of what I imagine the fighting zone is like. I hope that after the war the best of his articles are collected and published. On second thought, the little of Ralph Ingersoll’s writing I have read also sounds very good. I guess I am not a very good judge at that, for I’ve done very little reading in the past few months.

On the last boat trip I read “Storm Over the Land” by Carl Sandberg, the story of the Civil War. His pictures of the actions of the Army of the Potomac are very interesting to me,
probably because I began to get some system out of that collection of letters sent home by your grandfather. I really wish I had made copies of them and arranged them chronologically. That would be a good job for you in your spare time. Egad! I can just imagine you laboring through the maze of letters, sorting, copying, arranging. That just isn’t your type of work, is it?

The more I see of packages the other fellows receive, the more I realize what good ideas you have for selecting and packaging the boxes you send. Too bad the others can’t be as fortunate.

Well, enough for tonight. More in the future.

Love,
Son

Letter 154, 1944-02-22 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 16-17

Feb. 22, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Yes, you probably guessed it. We are in Italy. But don’t begin to worry. I haven’t even seen a German yet and really am just as safe, but busier, than I was in Africa. Don’t fret, and you will feel better and so will I.

Of course I can’t tell you where we are now, except to say we are in the Appenines. That helps a lot, for they are just as generalized as the Atlas Mts., but the army just insists I don’t reveal everything I know. (And it’s a darn good thing they stop me saying some of the things I would otherwise say. I feel like writing a book at times, “exposing” the army to the unsuspecting civilians). It is still winter here, let me assure you and we can see the snow covered and towering mountains all about us.

I bought you a small cameo when I was in Naples and I will try to get it off to you shortly. Also some postcards of Naples and Pompei (which I didn’t see).

Unfortunately, or fortunately, the city of Naples is a mass of ruins. I saw but little of it, but what little I saw was sufficient. Block after block of buildings that arexxxxxxxxxxxx. The xxxxxxxx there presumably once xxxxxxx the street has been removed and the city once more habitable, but appears most xxxxx and xxxxxx. As usual, being an incorrigible sightseer, I tried to see as much as possible and did get a glimpse of the king’s palace, a medieval castle, and a few typical renaissance buildings. Just glimpses though I want to make a return trip for a good look.

Naples is a surprising large city, at least to my previously provincial mind – even subways and tunnels for cars that burrow through the hills on which the city is built.

I always had heard of the beautiful bay of Naples and beautiful I imagine it was – once. The war at least has not changed the blue of the water, I would like to have seen it before.

Surprising close to Naples itself is the Isle of Capri. It is just a tiny speck of rock rising abruptly out of the water, spotted generously with little clustered communities. You can see the whole thing in a glance, but there is something about its audacity – minuteness that makes
it interesting. Many of the homes are built right on the edge of the cliffs, two or three or more hundred feet above the water level. Others are altered to man made terraces and cling to the sides of the grassy slopes. Another spot for a future visit.

At last I have seen an active volcano (three in fact), and the best view was that of the famous Vesuvius. All day long a tube of smoke rolls down the mountain, and at night the fire from the crater is reflected up into the pall of smoke at the peak. We even saw two brilliantly red spots where the molten lava was breaking through the cone near the top. Maybe I'll manage a trip to the top one of these days. I have great plans, don’t I?

The people in the little community near which we are located have all the appearances of being pro-Ally and I suppose they really are. They tell tales about how harsh & cruel the Germans were when they were in this region, how they took over the people’s homes & food, opened the spigots of their wine barrels when they found them, etc. The people tell how they hid in the hills while the fighting was going on having already hidden as many of their possessions as possible & driven the cattle & sheep into the even more distant hills. It all sounds plausible and at first you are taken in completely. Then you begin to make reservations. We are now the conquerors and they are doing their best to keep in good with the Allies – now. Many probably are sincere. But others still have relatives fighting with the Germans. And how much information they manage to convey to the enemy whose artillery is within earshot, though still many miles off, is hard to say. It is terrifically difficult not to want to really become friends with some of them, especially some of the ragged little fellows that elude the guards and manage to wander about the camp area. And at meal time it becomes even more difficult, as swarms of people, young and old, gather as close as possible to the mess lines, waiting to fill the tin cans they carry with the food we do not eat. Most of them do not look hungry, but some of our fellows who have become fairly intimate with a few families say they honestly have practically nothing in their homes to eat. The village doctor, who before the war was a fairly prosperous citizen, admitted that he would like to get some of the food from the kitchens for himself but his pride kept him away. I personally saw the old village priest, whom someone had given a can of C Rations, walk a few yards to the edge of the road, kneel down, open the can, with the help of a little fellow who ran up to aid him, and immediately eat the meal. There are sheep, goats, chickens and turkeys about, so they certainly are not starving. As to whether they are sufficiently well fed or not, I honestly do not know.

Oh yes, an historical note. It was not lava that covered Pompei, but ashes. At least, so they say.

Just to give you an idea of how we are bivouacked, I think I can reveal that my particular tent is in an olive grove in an Italian farmer’s backyard, only about a hundred yards from the house itself. The owner loaned us his shovel & two pronged spade to help dig our slit trenches, but personally I like our army tools better. The children tend their sheep in the area; the women walk by balancing enormous bundles on their heads and life goes on much as if we were not here – except that we are here and thus cannot be ignored. One of our fellows is caring for the farmer’s wife, who has been suffering with arthritis and apparently is affecting a cure. Various & sundry people wander in to the aid station – back aches, impetigo, cuts – etc. – and in our limited command of Italian we try to care for their ills. Perhaps the village doctor’s business is suffering but probably they would not go to visit him anyway.

There are still many German land mines planted in the hills about here and occasionally accidents still occur. Since we have been here, several Italians have been killed and severely
wounded by exploding mines which they had in their homes.

I went to the village church Sunday with some of the Catholic fellows in the detachment and am really glad I had the opportunity to do so. The women made the best of it by bringing in all available chairs with them. A typically small village choir practiced the music of the mass before the service & then we heard them repeat the music during the service itself. Afterwards they had a parade through the streets and singing all the way. Tell you more about this later.

Love,
Son

Letter 155, 1944-02-24 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 16-17

Feb. 24, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Today I'm trying to reread your letters that have been arriving during the last few days and really read them rather than scan them by candlelight. I'll even try to answer some of the questions you have been asking.

No, I still can't tell you where we were stationed in Africa but I can tell you the names of some of the cities I visited in Algeria – Tlemcen, Sidi Bel-Abbes – Magenta – Oran -. You guess.

Your letters are coming very regularly, and the V-Mail is very legible. Mom, why don't you pull out my typewriter and try getting your fingers in shape again.

It sounds to me as if you are going for clams in a big way. Well, I wouldn't mind some myself.

Yes, the burros must have tails, now that I think of it. Just the liberties an artist takes, you know.

Give my sympathy to Ed & the rest of the family.

I'm glad Jane remembered you with that unexpected gift of fruit. Darn nice of her.

Wasn't Art Hall married once? Did he get a divorce to marry Sarane Ives or what. Well, at least that puts two good musicians together.

I received a printed birthday card from the Danbury & Bethel Military Fund Committee signed by Wm. Brock, Frank Stone & Dennis Caroll, a birthday card from Mildred, two letters from Hazel Tobias & two from Miss Todd and a card from Mrs. Nowlan.

No, your letters are not censored. Absolutely not. They are never opened before I receive them.

I'm including a few clippings from “Stars and Stripes” that you may enjoy seeing. You can't imagine how true those cartoons are. Those Mauldin sketches really are excellent. I'll try to remember to include them more often.

Please explain, once again, to Martha etc. that I just can't find time to write as often as I would like. They haven't said anything about my not writing more often, but I know some of them are beginning to wonder. Just read what you wish to the others and that will have to be satisfactory.
Dear Mother & Dad,

I guess I'll have to alter slightly my remarks concerning the food situation amongst the Italians. Apparently those who look so well fed in this section are so because troops have been bivouacked here for so long. Some of our fellows who have been up in the mountains with mule trains say that the people they contacted there really are most ill fed, the chief difficulty in that section being limited transportation. The excellent roads that once led to that region are now impassible to trucks etc. because the Germans destroyed the innumerable bridges that are a necessity in this country. The small mountain communities are now dependent upon flour etc. that can be packed to them, and most likely it will be long before the roads are reconstructed, for these particular ones are not militarily important.

Charcoal is made in the hills about here and sell for about $3 for a particular amount, while the same quantity in Naples sells for $15. So the story goes.

We found a cave dug out of earthen stream bank that an Italian farmer had used as a dwelling while the Germans were here. Last evening we used it as an aid station during one of the inevitable night problems the army inflicts us with, and a darn good aid station it mad, too. (The colonel probably will have it for a C.P. the next thing unless we beat him to it). The cave consists of two separate rooms with two separate entrances but close together so that one canvas fly would shut out the light from both. Then safely in side, we lighted our lanterns & candles, set out the litters & emergency medical chests, and began to experiment with the new gasoline stoves we have been issued for cooking coffee – and anything else, if we had it to cook. Part of our station treatment consists of furnishing us an excellent excuse for having a pot boiling at all times. Of course we must of necessity sample it ourselves as do the various & sundry officers who drop in to see how things are going. Not a bad way to spend a cold, muddy windy evening. Even more comfortable than our tents.

Unfortunately the rainy season isn't over yet, but when it rains here in the valley it snows in the mountains. How I pity those fellows out in their slit trenches. Egad. This isn't the life for me. Pray for that French invasion so can get this blamed thing over with.

You know, we often talk about the British “muddling through”. Well, from what I see, we are not so bad at muddling ourselves. At times I fear we wallow.

More and more the prognosticators of those newspaper columnists surprise me. How in heavens name they have the gall to publish their guesses, whole those of us right here in the middle of the mess can get nothing but rumors is beyond me. This army will do this and that army will do that. It's all right, but it doesn't work that way. Well, 'nuff said. My pressure has
approximated normal again.

Love,
Son

Letter 157, 1944-02-26 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 16-17

V-Mail  
February 26, 1944
Dear Mother & Dad,

The rainy season is really here now, and it is easy to see why the armies bog down in weather like this. You know the kind of weather we have home in the late winter and early spring? – rain, mud, cold? Well, that's what we are having here now, but the great difference is that we are living in tents and there are no paved sidewalks or roads. Just drizzle and mud – and wet feet.

The food here really isn't bad at all, of much better quality and greater quantity than we had when we first arrived in Africa. However, you can still send packages of food. I can always eat you know. Some small containers of jam, peanut butter etc. to put on ration crackers would be excellent. I'm not hungry now so it is rather difficult to imagine just what else I would most like to have you include. Of course, candy is always good, nuts, etc. Oh yes, I would like some bouillon cubes – you know the type I mean.

If you should happen to see a book by Bill Mauldin entitled “Mad, Mules & Mountains”, I think you might enjoy looking through it. I saw it mentioned in a recent “Stars & Stripes” and though I haven't seen the book itself, I have seen his cartoons & know them to be very good. I included a couple in a recent air mail letter.

None of the packages you have been writing about recently have arrived as yet.

Love,
Son

Letter 158, 1944-02-27 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 16-17

V-Mail  
February 27, 1944
Dear Mother & Dad,

Who in the devil is Minnie Ireland and what is the Daughters of Liberty? I received a nice birthday card and thirty air mail stamps from her, for that organization she said grandma belongs to. Frankly, I never heard of it before. However, it was very thoughtful of them to send the stamps, and today I have been attempting to compose a thank you letter. At last I have finished it, but it is most inane. I even had to resort to talking about the weather to make some kind of letter out of it. Some of the fellows suggested I say simply, “Thanks for the stamps, Minnie” and close. I decided that wouldn't do, so I struggled along and handed out a line of slush.

Your mail is coming through very well now, much better than when we were in Africa. I
think air mail is the quicker way, but I am not sure. Both seem very good to me. I heard from Aunt Grace & Aunt Onie. Tell them I have received their letters. I'll try to write later.

Yes, I know some of those other fellows I met in Oran. I went to school with Gilbert Nichols. Miss Warner was from Missouri.

I received an air mail letter of the 16th yesterday, so you can see what service we are getting.

I hope those colds of yours are OK by now. I've been most fortunate, for I have had very little sickness since I've been over here. Just the sniffles now and then, a couple of touches of diarrhea & my ankle that almost as good as new now. Love, Son

March, 1944
Letter 159, 1944-03-03 (back to Table of Contents)

Dear Mother & Dad,

Why didn't you tell me when I was small & still pliable? Why did you let me grow old and unsuspecting without letting me in on the secret. The skeleton in the family closet has been revealed, however. And now I demand the answer. Which one of you is an Italian? A good many of the natives I meet here think I should speak Italian and there must be some foundation to their suspicions. I've suggested the only answer I can suggest. What do you say?

A good many of us have had extra leather bands sewed to the tops of our G.I. shoes, and so now have boot like affairs that reach halfway up our legs. With the pair of Arctics I managed to inveigle out of the supply sergeant, I'm making out very well in the mud & rain. Fortunately we have been issued an excellent wool scarf, so I won't be asking for you to send one of them.

From where I sit I can look across the hall and see a fire blazing in a huge fireplace in the room the Italian family occupies. Did you ever see the fireplace in the Joel Barlow house in Redding (Lloyd Blackman's now). It is slightly smaller than that, but built in the same style. I sat around the fire last evening, trying to talk to the family and absorbing the heat. The sticks & backlog occupy only a small section of the opening. The rest of the hearth has various & sundry purposes. Last evening Francisco the nine year old son (who can count to ten in English) pulled his chair up into a corner of the hearth itself while grandpa sat in the other. A oil lamp burned on a shelf in the wall of the fireplace. Really cozy & comfortable. I think I'll go back tonight.

I sent you a check recently for $210. Egad, think of the wealth I am accumulating. Perhaps I'll have enough to retire when the war is over. Don't be afraid to use as much of the money as you may want. I really mean that.

The owner of the house ever so often hops in with a brazier of glowing coals from the fireplace. They give off the most enjoyable amount of heat if you sit immediately next to them. All the comforts of home.

Enough for this installment.
Dear Mother & Dad,

I sent you a small package a day or two ago containing three small cameos and a couple of curios I still had in my wallet from Africa. Heaven knows when they will reach you, but at least you will know that they are on their way. All of the cameos originally were from Naples. I fear they are nothing very excellent (for my knowledge of cameos is very meagre), and one of them is a very, very poor specimen. The others are fairly nice. You might want to make them into a pin (or something similar). How about the other packages. Have any of them arrived as yet?

Now that you know I am in Italy, I suppose you have begun to worry. Well, don’t. I’m still safe, sound & kicking. And I expect to be the same for a good long while yet. Thinking of you sitting home worrying about me causes me more concern than being here where I am.

Received two letters yesterday dated the 19th & 20th.

Remember my telling you that the Germans used houses for aid stations. We have decided to do the same thing & so our aid station is now in part of an Italian families. Now it is Italian I am trying to learn. You should see me running about with an Italian-English book in one hand and gesturing madly with the other.

Love,
Son

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Dear Mother & Dad,

I have received no packages or letters for several days now. Of course, the packages are always on the way and never seem to catch [up] to me. As for the letters, they are behind schedule because it has become a little more difficult for mail to reach us regularly. However I’m rather expecting that some will come through tonight.

We have moved our aid station to another house in another village. Dad would certainly appreciate the papering job that these people have. The ceiling consists of the flooring of the second story and the supporting beams – with designed wall paper covering the underside of the flooring and going all about the beams to the next ??? floor of flooring. Clear, isn’t it? I’ll draw you a picture one of these days.

It is still raining in this part of the world, but the temperature is considerably warmer now.
It was even enjoyably sunshiny part of today.

I've been snooping about a bit in some of the deserted houses in the village, looking through the previous owner's possessions. I found very little – a little bone something – or – other, a few coins – and of course furniture etc. that can't easily be moved. Woops, the ambulance is leaving with the mail. More later. Love, Son

**Letter 162, 1944-03-07** (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 18-19

V-Mail

March 7, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Only because you insist and not, of course, because I enjoy eating, I'm tempted to ask for another package of food. I wish postal authorities would withdraw that regulation about written requests and simplify matters by letting you do the selection, but just to pacify them, I'll do a little listing. I would enjoy any or all of the following – gum drops, sardines, chocolate candy, dried fruit, fruit cake, etc., etc. This will give you something to go on.

Don't worry about not hearing from me too regularly, for I warned you that at times we would be kept too busy to do much writing. I'll do my best. You quit worrying and every thing will be O.K.

We have a very nifty set up for lighting our aid station now. We are using jeep headlights and an extra storage battery which we have acquired. Almost like day light. Then, with our Coleman gas lamp, kerosene lanterns, candles with plasma reflectors and flashlights, or torches as the English call them, we are ready for any and all emergencies. I'm writing this about midnight and still am not straining my eyes (except when Lt. Singmaster flips the light out, thinking he can make the light even brighter).

Don't worry. I'm not on the Anzio beachhead. Just because we moved to Italy about that time doesn't mean we are there. I'm still located in sunny southern Italy. And so to bed. Love, Son

**Letter 163, 1944-03-10** (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 18-19

March 10, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

So this is the army! You would never believe it, the way we are living. Sleeping and eating and almost entirely living in buildings, doing our own cooking, purifying our own water, eating off plates rather than mess kits, staying up and awake until twelve or one in the morning (or even later if the necessity arises), sleeping when we feel like it or when we can and treasure hunting through the ruined buildings. And I still would prefer to be home.

Practically all our waking hours are spent making white gasoline for our Coleman lantern from red gasoline. Lt. Singmaster has a monopoly on white gas production and therefore asserts his authority in controlling the luminosity of the aid station. Chaplain Newman did his bit today, and so, tomorrow, when his petrol is put into use, I presume he will be putting
in his two cents. Red gasoline & charcoal & filter paper → white gasoline. White gasoline + Coleman lantern → light + \( \text{FW} \).

Oh, yes, the bombs we use for killing insects fleas, flies, bugs, etc. Or rather the spray Lt. Singmaster uses. I just mention that, for the whole room full is coughing and sneezing, medics, partially asphyxiated by the fumes that Lt. Singmaster insists on torturing us with. True it kills the insects, but I would enjoy it better if I could remain alive too.

We just received a bag of oranges & lemons picked from the groves in the area. Most of the orchards are mined but a few have been sapped & consequently are safe to venture into. The oranges are excellent and the lemons huge. Tomorrow, old boy, we'll have tea & lemon.

Only one package has arrived that was sent since we arrived in Africa. That was an 8 oz. affair containing chocolate bars. All the others here are finding the same to be true. There is a definite holdup somewhere. I do wish they would come soon.

Remember writing about Jack Gilbert? What you said about his connection with the army holds true for me too. We both are in similar situations. So Alan Kanouse is in Africa now. His arrival corresponded to mine.

It is best to forget that Gruber affair. I feel it is not wise. I hope you understand.

Two copies of “Time” have arrived and no others. The Danbury News comes spasmodically, usually a month and a half late. It is still good, nevertheless, to read the hometown gossip.

I bumped into a fellow from home the other day. He said he went to school with me, but I honestly can't remember him. His name was Davis, Robert Davis I believe, from Sugar Hollow Road.

I'm really too sleepy to write more tonight – I'll try again tomorrow.

Love,
Son
I don’t believe I told you about the excellent ice cream I had shortly after arriving in Italy. Really nice rich Italian stuff that tasted especially good because it is so scarce in this section of the world – and it was the first I had since leaving the U.S. with the Italian pastries. I struck a very fine combination. Why I should think of that now is difficult to say except that the coke perhaps brought a resurgence of pleasant memories. Excuse the deviations.

I have been attempting to read a bit of Shakespeare, but so far have been able to devote only a little time to such luxuries. So far I have read about one page. Excellent progress.

We spend practically our entire daylight hours here cooking our meals and eating. I did tell you about our Coleman stoves, but I believe I skipped the fact that we also have a cooking set consisting of nesting kettles & coffee pots and two frying pans, pancake turner ladle, spoon, carving knife. Now we enjoy the best meals we have had since coming into the army, prepared by ourselves from five in one rations. These rations get their name from the fact that one box contains enough food for five men, for three meals. There is a great variety of food and in order to feed all the same type of food at a given meal we assiduously assemble similar cans from the various boxes. We may wait several days before eating beets, for example, simply because the various boxes we open contain only one can and not enough for all twenty. Many of the foods are canned and many boxed in dehydrated form. Just to show you our shopping list, let me give you a few of the items. Ready? Here goes. Crackers, coffee, cocoa, sugar, canned butter, powdered lemon, orange and grape juice, candy (charms, butterscotch, root beer, peppermint) salt, fruit bars, dehydrated rice pudding, breakfast cereals, rice, fruit spread & apple euter (dehydrated), bacon, sausage, pork loaf, corned beef, roast beef, spaghetti & meat balls, beets, corn, beans (string & lima), carrots, orange, grapefruit & tomato juices, dried beans, apricots & pears, evaporated milk – well, what do you want for your money. Then with the occasional fresh butter & bread, pancake flour (syrup made with sugar & water), onions from the fled Italians gardens, and oranges & lemons from the groves that have been freed from on their all possessing mines. Oh, yes, tea. Then, with all the combinations possible, you can imagine how well we eat. Addenda no. 2 – dehydrated soups – cigarettes - & on –

The British troops have some excellent foods that we lack, especially cheese & fish. However, inasmuch as they ate so much fish during the African campaigns, they seldom indulge now and so are glad to donate their share to us. In return, they enjoy our C-Rations, of which we have become so heartily sick. A British officer was in for dinner the other evening and had corn for the first time in his life. He had seen it “on the screen” but never tasted it before. Today our English fellow dropped in to find how to serve tomato juice – he had never seen any before.

We have a really fine set up here for an aid station. The station proper opens directly onto the narrow cobbled street the floor level being about one step above the street. The door is heavy wood and, since the rooms are quite narrow at the front, takes up most of the front of the building. There are two rooms, one separated from the other by a large archway. We have improved on the ceiling by adding corrugated metal sheets to catch the rain water that inevitably leaks through the ceiling. By incorporating various chairs & tables salvaged from the ruined homes about into our décor, we have quite a “homey” atmosphere. At least we can imagine it to be so. We even have a large mirror on the wall. No paintings yet, however. I'll try to sketch it for you one of these days, but I am fearful of the results.

You can see that I am still going strong. This rambling epistle is enough to convince you of that. Still struggling along.
And so to bed with my blanket & Pepys.

Love,
Son

Letter 165, 1944-03-14 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 18-19

V-Mail

March 14, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

When your long overdue packages arrive, I am sure that I will then be sufficiently supplied with enough V-Mail paper to last me a good long time. Since I wrote asking for the paper, V-Mail paper has begun to dribble in from time to time! I much prefer air mail anyway, for it seems to travel much more quickly. I just heard that we have another bag of packages that is coming up to the village tonight, and naturally enough, I am hoping there will be some there for me. I'll know in a few hours.

We had tea for supper this evening, flavored with lemon from one of the nearby groves. Fresh orange juice for breakfast tomorrow, too. Egad. Such luxury in a land of war.

The Italians seem to like to build their cities and villages on the tops of hills. Of course a good many are otherwise, but in this region a great many also are located right at the top. The buildings are constructed almost completely of stone and for this reason there is very little evidence of destruction by fire in the ruins all about us. When the shells hit, the walls just break off in chunks. Thank heaven. The walls are thick and sturdy. They can stand a lot of pounding.

Love,
Son

Letter 166, 1944-03-15 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 18-19

V-Mail

March 15, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Letter of March 1 and package containing crackers charr, cocoa, caramels, etc. came last evening – the first large package that you sent since our arrival over seas. We've begun to nibble at it already, and I know that shortly it will be completely gone. Darn good stuff. I'm eating some of the candy right now.

Miss Todd writes quite regularly but I fear I don't answer very often. You are about the only ones to whom I write with any degree of regularity.

It is strange that none of the packages I have sent to you have arrived as yet. They certainly should be coming along soon, now, I do hope so.

I noticed that you have been numbering your V-Mail letters, but inasmuch as I have to burn all my letters shortly after they arrive, I have been unable to note any that might have arrived safely. They seem to lack any little continuity.

Love,
Son
Did I tell you that I have opened both medical pouches full length? In one I carry my medical equipment, and in the other various personal items – socks, towel, candy, toilet articles and the like – almost as all encompassing as your purse. Not quite though. I probably never will find a container that will be the equal of that.

Love,
Son

Letter 167, 1944-03-17 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 18-19

V-Mail March 17, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Package number ? arrived today – the one containing candles, V-Mail, cocoa, cigarette lighter, leather pouches, pen, etc. You really did some very excellent purchasing. The pouches fit exactly into my shirt pockets and thus just fill the bill. Gasoline works excellently in the lighter. I tried it tonight. I hope the rest of the packages come at regular intervals rather than in a bunch. Much more convenient for carrying, you know.

Do keep that calendar you asked about. I will have use for it.

You really surprised me with that question about halazone. Yes, we have some handy, but I have never used any yet. Instead we use calcium hypochloride for water purification. The first halazone we have had came to us just about a day before your letter you sent arrived. Nice timing.

I can no longer mention the names of cities (according to instruction from the censor) and so I cannot answer your questions concerning places I visited in Africa. I’ll tell you orally at a later date.

Oh, yes. Send me some gum drops when you can. That cheese and crackers idea was excellent also. Please, no more charms! We are getting so many now with our rations that I dare not look one in the face. Love, Son

Letter 168, 1944-03-15 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 18-19

Mar. 15, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Here are some notes and sketches I made early this morning by lantern light while taking my turn of duty here at the aid station. Three of us divide the hours between ten at night and seven in the morning, and inasmuch as there were no interruptions, I spent part of my three hours scribbling away with my pen & pencil. They are not at all good artistically, but they are clear enough so that you can get some idea of our living quarters. Most of the fellows stay in the other rooms near by, but the officers and the three of us who are on duty evenings sleep
here also. If they are too faulty, blame the flickering lantern.

Love,
Son

Simplified Floor Plan of Our Aid Station

[Drawing of layout]

The stairway shown in the plan enters the building from the street and not from the interior. There is storage space under the stairs and a little corner fire place. The two rooms are much more pack jammed than the sketch would indicate – litters standing in corners, rope hanging from the wall, clothes & equipment hung on nails, boxes & other supplies stored under tables, litter, cots, splint sets, waste boxes on the floor, lanterns candles and even our jeep lights & battery. The battery is on the chest at the end on the litter, the lights hanging above.

[A drawing of the aid station]

A view of our luxurious aid station. Note the large mirror behind the medical chart no. 2 and the field telephone nearby. The black hole is a niche set deep in the wall. The small fireplace-looking-affair on which the Coleman stove is sitting is made of stone & plaster like the walls. The circular hole apparently was for a smoke pipe. Also note the Rube Goldberg contrivance of corrugated iron, a funnel and a length of rubber hose used for carrying off the rain water that seeps through the rubble on the floor above. The roof two stories above was long before destroyed by shells. The box shelves hold food supplies.

Letter 169, 1944-03-19 (back to Table of Contents)

March 19, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I spent the afternoon rummaging about in an attic just as I used to do when we visited Grandma’s. But today the contents were entirely different. The great attic is in the building in which our aid station is located. Apparently it was once a school for small children run in conjunction with the attached church. The vacated owners left much behind and, of course, I had my usual curiosity. The attic closely resembled ours so you can judge why I refrain from listing the contents in ??te Here’s just a sample: much pottery, great glass flasks of vino, great quantities of linen, books, magazines, pictures, ???ets, grain, chest, furniture etc. My rifling was to no avail for I failed in my search for souvenirs, but I did find a few interesting books. Maybe I’ll find an opportunity to send them home.

Christmas number two engulfed me the last few days. The packages for which I have been waiting so long began to pour in – one from Mildred and three from you. ???? Also two 8 oz. packages, one containing the rolls of film. (By the way, send me a couple more if you can. I have taken two exposures already and by the time the films reach me I know I can use them)
have so much extra food now I scarcely know what to do with it, but in a day or two I will be looking forward [sic] to another package again. Everything came very well, even the small mouthful of cake. I'm planning to carry the cocoa in my extra aid pouch to give me relief from the coffee for which I care so very little.

I'm sorry you haven't heard from me in so long. I don't know what can be holding up the mail, for I have written to you fairly regularly, except for a period of about a week and a half. I presume mail is once again arriving by now. Let's hope so, anyway.

The oranges here are quite tasty. I'm surprised to find that this is the orange season here since it is still so near winter. The trees are loaded for there are no longer any native fruit growers to relieve the boughs of their weight. The army boys do pretty well in that direction, but the fact that so many of the groves are mined prevents any real exploitation.

I got a look at the mountains held by the Germans and that look was not good. It is not difficult to understand why the fighting has been so difficult. The Allies have been struggling against German mountain observation ever since they reached the peninsula, and they are still fighting under the same conditions. And you should see the mountains. It was comfortably warm where I was standing but the commanding mountains are snow capped. I'm positive that the observers with their 30 power glasses could have seen me clearly if they had had their eyes directed toward me at the minute. Not good. You feel like a fish in a goldfish globe. And that is not a good feeling, especially when you know those self same observers direct the fire of the opposing artillery.

At length I have seen some real Roman ruins, but only at night for a fleeting second – a coliseum and aqueduct – just forms in the dark, only clear enough to discern the outline. Not much, but my historical tour of Italy is just beginning.

Love, Son
behind.

I expect to get a package off to you shortly. It probably will arrive in a month or two.

Love, Son

Letter 171, 1944-03-22 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 18-19

March 22, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Believe it or not, I’ve just been eating home made fudge concocted during the last half hour. Some of the fellows put together cocoa, sugar, water & canned butter & succeeded very well, despite the fact that the butter didn’t melt and ended as lumps in the bottom of the pan. Mighty tasty! Mighty tasty!

I just read Ernie Pyle’s “This is Your War”. I think you might enjoy it even though it lacks something that his daily column has. Perhaps it is simply that I am more concerned with Italy about which he is writing now rather than the African campaign covered in the book.

I just sent another package containing a pot pouri assortment – a copper spoon, an enormous key typical of the kind the natives use on their doors, a little carved ivory thing-a-ma-bob & a copper plaque, and two native peasant bodices. Nothing of any value, just a “mess” of things you might like.

Please send me some five cent stamps for mailing future packages. I can’t use air mail & so far have been unable to obtain any other stamps. Those on this last package were ones I saved from a package you sent at Christmas time – in the X-mas rush they forgot to cancel them.

I’m including in this letter a V-Mail letter of yours that arrived recently. In handling it was torn and was sealed with official stamps. I know you would like them for your collection.

I took a Cook’s tour of a nearby city today. The city (the name of which would be censored if I included it) is perched, as so many Italian cities are, on the very top of a hill, commanding the river valley and roads below. The buildings come to the very edge of the sharp slope and stop abruptly – no outskirts. The approach is quite a stiff climb and I was perspiring and puffing by the time I reached the first buildings. From then on great wide, cobbled stairs winding about one edge of the city made the climbing easier. Buildings lined one side of this street and a stone wall and distant scenery the other. Real meat for the tourist.

The city has been thoroughly shelled and the debris caused numerous detours. The only inhabitants now are the few troops occupying it, the inhabitants having fled with the Germans. A strange feeling it is, wandering about a deserted city, seeing only an occasional visitor like ourselves peering at the ruins, looking for historic spots and pouring over the personal belongings the owners had left behind. You can almost expect the ghosts of the natives to step out from the next alley-way.

The slope on which the town is clinging is so steep that several of the streets along the periphery are actually tunnels burrowing their way beneath buildings and even gardens above. This section of the town in particular struck me as being especially ancient. These tunnel streets are about four feet wide and seven feet high, dark, dismal, odoriferous, apparently
requiring street lights even during the day when it is a bustling thoroughfare. On one side
the apartments and shops are on the level of the street, on the others you have to descend
several steep steps to reach the rooms. We marked our way with chairs and pillows for fear of
becoming lost in the maze.

At right angles to this section, climbing steeply to the crest of the hill, are narrow avenues,
lined with closely packed four and five storied buildings opening directly onto the sidewalk.
No vehicles could possibly pass through. Archways connect many of the buildings on opposite
sides of the street, and those with the many overhanging balconies, make even these streets
fairly dismal even in the light of day.

The street at the top of the hill, the main street of the city, was slightly wider and almost
as ancient appearing as the other sections. A ducal castle, now much destroyed, is the main
building around the large plaza at one end of this street. Three sides of the square are bound
by buildings. The fourth is open, offering an excellent view of the low lands below.

Several of the small churches along the way are completely destroyed, but the main church
is still in good condition. I looked about a bit and even attempted to take a picture of the
interior. I'm hoping the altar and the rostrum decorated with mosaics will stand out clearly.
Of course, I couldn't even try to include the many alcoves with their special relics and original
oil paintings. I made no attempt to date the structure but I did notice that the date on the
rostrum was about 1620.

Though the exterior and actual structure of the buildings are very old, the Italians have
made the houses and business district liveable by renovating the interiors. On the outside a
butcher shop looks like any of the other buildings – a stone front and fairly large doorway.
On the inside it is white tile, with a modern showcase and refrigerator. Many of the homes,
crowded in like New York apartments, looked decrepit to my eyes, but inside I found really
nice furniture, flooring, kitchens etc. instead of the primitive furnishings I expected. Some
homes even sported walled gardens and courtyards containing orange trees and bird baths.

Despite all my wanderings I could uncover no plan or system to the streets or the homes.
Streets turn off alley ways and courtyards. Stairways branch off from other stairways, doors
appear in little alcoves. In one home I entered by one stairway and left by another and did
not realize my mistake until I found myself egressing on another street. Many houses have
very narrow frontage, are quite deep and are a good number of stories high. You can even
come out onto roof balconies & then enter rooms on the same level. A veritable hodge-podge
of buildings, rooms & stairways. Apparently, the city just grew from year to year and added to
itself as necessity arose.

I found several postcard views of the city and ma saving them to send when censorship
conditions allow. They will give you some idea of what we saw.

We sleep most comfortably here. The building was filled with many mattresses and after
sprinkling them with precautionary insect powder, we covered them with a shelter half and
put them to the practical test. Very nice. I don't believe I have slept any more comfortably
since entering this man's army. Soldiers seem to find little comforts anywhere.

Someone has appropriated the bottle of ink you included in one of the packages and so I
am beginning to run short. However I am not depleted. Just too lazy to fill my pen right now.

Love,
Son
March 23, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Of course you have read recently about the eruption of Vesuvius. Unfortunately we are not near enough to see what is happening, but during the day we can see the great clouds of billowing smoke and dust that are thrown hundreds of feet in the air. I should imagine that it can be seen over a greater part of Allied controlled southern Italy.

I'm preparing to get off another package of souvenirs – a book on Italian heraldry, two black prints and some porcelain medicine jars. The last items may sound especially strange, but I think they may be of some decorative value. If you don't like them, just toss them out.

These Italians apparently take shots for practically anything. There is quite a supply of medicines here at the school, and most of them are in the form of ampules all ready for injection, - everything from colds to constipation. They really believe in these things. I've looked into several deserted homes and found lying handy, probably awaiting their owners' return, hypo needles & ampules. They probably will need them when they find the condition their homes are in. Several aspirin would help even more. Incidentally a great many of the concoctions are either made by Bayer or by German concerns. There are also many bilious looking affairs containing the “raw materials” out of which even stranger things can be made. Thank heavens I'm one of these Italian pin cushions.

I must write to Martha tomorrow, for I have become quite lax in that respect. You will have to tell my tales for me.

I never have received the clipping concerning Warren, but I hope it will be along shortly. I really appreciate any clippings of that sort, for the local papers arrive months late, and if I depended on them I'd be in a sad way.

Did you say that you had also subscribed to Newsweek? If so, I have never received any of the copies. Time is coming quite regularly now.

Your oil burner has nothing on us. We have a gasoline stove, complete with jacket of an inverted aluminum kettle and stove pipe, that serves its purpose as a heater remarkably well, though the sun shiny days are warm the nights still are cold.

Enough for now. More in the near future.

Love, Son

V-Mail from P.F.C. William J. Chambers [?] Somewhere in England

Dear Eva & Trum,

I am writing you a few lines to let you know that I am fine and hope

Consult original: copy too hard to read
March 27, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

You should hear about our entertainment network. There is a radio in one of the company C.P.'s and with a phone placed near the loud speaker and the switchboard open; we can listen in on our phone at the aid station and get the impression that we are listening to the program over a crystal set. I heard part of a stupid quiz program this evening and a short musical number before I had to leave.

The chaplain has his portable organ here at the station, so we can make our own music. We make bountiful music together. What key board technic I have developed! My “Swing Low” is Carnegie Hall material.

Lt. Singmaster. Lt. Singmaster. Lt. Singmaster. Lt. Singmaster. Lt. Singmaster told me today I never seem to mention him in my letters, so I included this enviable roster of names to satisfy his egoism. Lt. Singmaster. (once again for good measure)

I found an English rain coat today that I am appropriating for my own use. It is much more water repellant than ours and also has the advantage of being camouflaged. It is surprising the amount of valuable materials left behind by troops when they leave an area, especially expensive explosives and other munitions.

Our aid station is very modern, even to having an operating table. Someone located a very good table in a deserted Italian clinic and we carried it to the aid station in our jeep. Always the very best you see.

I went off on a short sightseeing trip today with the reconnaissance sergeant of the heavy weapons company that is located near us. Our aid station is close to a road at the base of a sharp hill, and it was up this little cliff that we struggled. The approach really is fairly good, however, for the hill side is stepped off in wide terraces used for holding the olive trees to the steep slope. Each terrace is banked up with an excellently constructed stone wall. You perhaps remember my writing that at one time we were bivouacked on the side of slippery hill. This time we are fortunate enough to be at the bottom, but many of the companies are scattered over the hill on these terraces where they are living in little huts they have constructed for themselves. A few are using tents, but most of them find the stone & sand bagged huts more convenient. From the very top of the hill we had an excellent view of the wide fertile river valley that stretched out beneath us, of ruined stone buildings setting atop a little bare knob in the middle of another nearby valley, small villages looking like cream colored spots on the distant mountains, and of course the inevitable mountain ranges extending in all directions. Really beautiful county, though.

Oh, yes. Another request for food. Do you think you could manage some more candy similar to the Easter egg you sent. Of course, raisins, nuts, canned sandwich spreads, chocolate candy, cookies and the like are most excellent. You do the selecting.

Tonight Capt. Stratman is in a musical mood, pumping madly at the organ and rendering tunes for our amazement. Lt. Singmaster and Chaplain Newman are matching their wits in a stupendous chess bout (and the telephone keeps ringing with Lt. Bogardus on the other end asking when he can borrow the chess set). Hazen Ruper, the C.Q., is reading, and very
obviously I am writing this clever bit of prose. Just a cozy evening at home, with a fire burning in the fireplace as well as a fire in our gas stove.

Warm, comfortable, dry and sleepy. I fear this army life will make me lazy. Every day I plan to read and write and I never seem to get around to doing it.

Love,
Son

March 27, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Lolling about the aid station has made me lazy, for I've slipped up on writing for a couple of days. At night, when I settle down to catch up with my correspondence, my eyes begin to grow heavy and that, along with the conversation whizzing by my flapping ears, simply doesn't add up to “Letters”.

A Catholic priest, two sisters and an interpreter from Patterson, N.J. came to the aid station this evening, looking for the church vessels and medicines they had left behind. The church items were in good condition I should imagine, because we have tried to see that none of these items are touched. The medicines are a mess, for most of them are in ampules and easily broken – and believe me they are. Naturally everything here emphasizes black out, but these visitors from the outside world couldn’t or wouldn’t comprehend that. They even tried to strike matches in the balcony of the church, and while our chaplain was racing madly about in search of the interpreter to tell them to stop, the sisters “snuck” away to the attic for a bag of grain for the bishop, probably lighting a beacon for any and all German observers for miles around. If I earn my purple heart tonight you can blame it on the clergy.

I've been considering asking you to try to buy a 35 millimeter camera for me, but I fear that it might be broken or lost in transport. I'll just continue getting along by slipping films into others' cameras and then claiming I have a right to use it because the roll is mine.

We all had wonderfully hot showers yesterday, and you can’t realize how really swell that is. Unfortunately there are Italian civilians handy, so we have to do our own laundry – what little we do. Minre so far has consisted of under wear and a (flannel) wool shirt. They weren't a great success. I’ll still use the laundry when I return home.

That sounds like Phebe. Always looking for trouble where no trouble is.

From now on, it might help to address my mail with 3rd Bn (for 3rd Battalion) after Med. Det. It isn't necessary but I will help the mail clerks.

It's surprising how little reading I am doing with all my leisure time. I just can't seem to concentrate – must be the hot weather we are having. Maybe my brain is becoming petrified. Could by you know –

Woops.

The mail is ready to go and this has yet to be censored.
Dear Mother & Dad,

Do you recongnize the paper? Of course you don’t. Suffice it to say it arrived in a package that came today. The ink you so carefully packed in another package was stolen before I even unsealed the paraffin. When I discovered the culprit he threw the evidence in the middle of a mined orange orchard before I could rescue it. I fear a pair of G.I. gloves and my leather dress gloves disappeared at the same time by the same means and by the same person. I do hate to have some one like that always at hand. I like to feel free to leave my possessions lying about and know they will be there when I return. At least I know who to watch.

One of the fellows has a sterno stove and right now I have a cup of cocoa heating on it. Any time you can, send me more of those boxes of Nestles. They really are very excellent. Yum! Really good.

If old oracle consulting, profesying Nostradamus is correct the war should be over any day now – April 9th to be exact. Would that it were, but I fear that Hitler and the British invasion strategists are trying to prove him false.

The Mesa Verde cliff dwellers have nothing on us. Some lame brained mountain climbing enthusiast apparently selected our present bivouac cliff. Any minute I am looking forward to another attack, by a hostile tribe and I'm ready to draw up the ropes and ladders to hold up the advance. Must have to creep into their tents on hands and knees and use their tent ropes to tie them in bed so they won't become W.I.A. – F.C. – skull – humans – femur, etc. L.O.D. Yes – 3rd Bn Aid Sta. EJ Stratman Capt. MC. A side view of our tents looks similar to this [drawing].

except that I haven’t indicated the furrows, rain ditches, barracks bags, bed rolls and other paraphernalia. I stepped out of the door today and slid down hill twenty feet before catching hold of a tent rope on another canvas homestead almost vertically below. You can’t realize how dangerous this life is. The personnel office received twenty applications for increase in life insurance premiums after we had been here five minutes. “Hartford Life” should set up a branch office here. I [am] offering my services to them today.

When the rain hits the ground here, it almost immediately takes on a close resemblance to a spot of grease on a linoleum floor. Chow time was a real spectacle today, for the real chow hounds showed themselves. One Texas vortex couldn’t wait to untangle his fork from the handle of his mess gear and began to eat with his face pushed right to the bottom of his kit. The fact that his hands and feet were clutching wildly at the time for a hold in the slippery mud seem to bother him not in the least. Another had difficulty in selecting a place to sit and so simply let his feet go out from under him and plopped down in a cushioned mud pillow. He stay[ed] there too and ate on undisturbed.
Our mountain climbing rope comes in really handy here. We have it stretched up the side of the hill to offer support to our wayward feet. Our latrine is in an old olive grove on a plateau just above us but in order to reach it either steps cut in the bluff or ropes really are necessary. Going up really offers difficulties but coming down is simple – grab the rope, close your eyes and slide – and pray, of course. Don’t worry though. Very few are hurt seriously, just a broken leg or two this afternoon. We don’t even consider the broken wrists and arms, for they can still get about without much help.

I’ve begun to read a bit again. I got out of the habit for a while but I’m getting in the groove again – A bit of Shakespeare now and then but mostly U.S. history.

Another package is on the way – medicine jars and the like. Just junk to you I’m afraid, but I had fun collecting it.

I finally heard from Martha today. She has been working hard on her term paper in philosophy so I can well understand how busy she has been. Also a note from Barbara.

We were paid today so you can expect another check shortly. I have never heard that you received the second one I sent. Do let me know about that.

I’m hoping I may be able to visit Naples in a day or two and do a bit of sightseeing. I do hope so – camera and all.

By the way, don’t expect these snapshots very soon. They have to be developed & censored here and then I’ll have them sent directly home to be printed.

10:15. My ravelled sleeve needs knitting. Good night.

Love,
Son

postcards (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 18-19
[a file with many postcards, mostly from Pompei, follows this letter]

April, 1944
Letter 177, 1944-04-01 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 20

Dear Mother & Dad,

Just a note from the biggest April Fool joke you ever had played on you.

“Time” is arriving very well now. I received a mid-March edition yesterday and that really is good time. (I’m sorry! Really. That pun just slipped out.)

A bit of an historical footnote:- Remember the very recent drive to route the Jerries out of Cassimo? You know that unfortunately the attempt was not a great success and that the news reports laid much of the discredit on the rain and the blackness of the night. Well, for once I can vouch for the veracity of the newspaper accounts, for we knew that something was brewing that night and watched carefully the weather conditions. The sudden, unexpected rain swelled even the smallest streams many times their normal size and made the mud stickier & deeper than ever. It was the blackest night I ever remember seeing, so black that actually you couldn’t
see your hand before your face. The entrance to our aid station building was sand bagged and I walked into the bags without seeing them. Even the white background of the Red Cross flag was invisible. It's little wonder that those fellows at the front, stumbling through the mud and water, dropping their weapons when they slipped & thus clogging them with dirt, became disorganized. For once, at least, the blame can't be laid totally on the heads of men – the weather too was on the Jerries' side that night.

The sun has dried our slide of mud and, thus today we are once again walking in the normal human standing position. It's wonderfully comfortable here today, but I imagine that there is still snow in the mountains.

I'm not much of a movie fan, as you know, but tonight I hope to see Madam Currie if it is still playing. We now have an army theater set up near us, and that will keep me out of mischief a few hours.

These Italians really use every bit of arable land. Remember the steep hill the Baron Munchausen in me told you about last night? It isn't too steep to use the ground for planting olive trees, however. You can find gardens and orchards clinging practically anywhere. It is easy to realize now why the economy of Italy is so difficult to manage. There is much to do with little or nothing. Maybe they needed Ethiopia after all.

Mail Call – Danbury News Times, February 16. Not another blasted thing. Hell's bells. Where are the letters. Tomorrow there must be some.

I may ask you to send me a Modern library book one of these days. I think I could manage to carry one of the regular editions. I have a catalogue handy and will do my selecting from that.

Love,
Son

April 2, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Our Palm Sunday service was held in a most symbolic locale today – the edge of an olive grove. “And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethpage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples.” Yours could have been nowhere nearly as nice, though naturally I would have preferred to have been with you.

I'm afraid I'm rather iconoclastic and cynical in regard to church rituals, symbols and the like, but those of Easter and Christmas still "get me" somewhat, despite the fact that I know people get “church” and “religion” so horribly mixed up. I guess that basically I believe in the philosophy of religion but not in the church. The church is simply a necessary evil that accompanies it. Wow! Where did all that come from? I'm hiding from the inquisition already.

I often wonder how we have managed to ferry so many vehicles across the Atlantic and then the Mediterranean. Day and night the once peacefully quiet road that twists through the narrow valley road below us swarms with trucks, and jeeps, and cars and ambulances, and motorcycles. Just like the Henry Hudson Drive early some Sunday evening. They pour in an
almost continuous stream.

I'm enclosing a clipping I want to save for reference in regard to theories of history. Just keep it with this letter so it will be handy when I return. Very similar to Huntington's theories concerning geographic interpretations of history.

April 3, 1944

Yesterday I somehow acquired a stomach upset that put me to bed for a few hours, and thus interrupted my letter. I'm feeling a little better today and will try to finish this note before the day is over.

I would hate to get in a tussle with any of these Italian women. From the way they can manage such enormous loads on their heads, it would bode ill for their opponents.

They are a persistent crew, too. Of course little knots of them are always clustered around bivouac areas in the vicinity of the kitchen asking, and often times almost demanding, food. You can't help feeling sorry for these ragged people, especially the pleading faces of the children. However, there is something about their attitude that annoys me, too, as if it were their right to have us support them. They seem to forget that it was due much to their own faults that they are in this present mess. We Americans are too prone to forget that but a few weeks ago these selfsame people were fighting for the other side. It is good to forgive your enemies, but it isn't of much value unless you can prove to them that their other mode of living was definitely wrong. And what should we do about? Damned if I know. It's the same old problem of how to settle the war. Would that I had the answer.

Very few natives speak anything but Italian, and they feel anyone should be able to understand them. If not the first time, by repeating in a louder & louder tone, you certainly should know what they mean, especially with the gestures added. There is the story about the guard who was accosted by a vociferous native woman who ranted and railed at him in Italian. In vain did he attempt to convince her he couldn't understand. She just babbled on. As a last attempt he began to tell the story of the Three Little Bears in English, interrupting his tale for nothing. It was she who eventually retired, ignominiously defeated.

Everyone is so sick of fruit flavored life savers they don't even bother to pick them up in the chow line. If accidentally they do forget and get a fist full thrust upon them, they toss them to the Italian children to watch them scramble.

Your letters are not coming through as quickly as they once did. Probably it is just happenstance but many are receiving letters dated much later than yours several days before mine arrive. I realize there is nothing you can do about it. Just thought I would let you know.

Still no pass to Naples appears. I guess it was the usual army bull. They make promises, even issue orders concerning such things and then withdraw them. Then everyone waits about doing nothing important during the period for which the pass was to be issued. This time, however, it really was just a rumor, so we can't complain too much.

Time for another nap. I'm not quite as thoroughly recovered as I thought I was.

Love,
Son
April 3, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I’m enclosing two money orders totaling $110. When this letter arrives be sure to let me know. I never received a receipt for the last check you should have received and I want to check on that soon if you have not got it yet.

Heard from Jim B. today and he has moved once more. If you want his address it is as follows:

Sqd., Class 44F Box 38
L.A.A.F.
Lemoore Army Flying School
Lemoore, California

Incidentally, I believer Lemoore is where Ulman’s people now live. Remember my once wishing to get in the medics in the air corps? It was there I was hoping to go, but it is very obvious that I didn’t.

Jim sent me a picture of himself in his plane. A really good picture, but he always comes out well anyway.

Did you know that Ed Munch’s sister is the one who is engaged to Warren? Two mighty lucky boys.

Went to the movies tonight but left because it was terrible. Mae West and all that goes with it.

It does appear that Mr. Case, Major Case now, is making out ok. Just what kind of position does he have.

If you keep on talking to those clerks in the markets you won’t have to do any shopping at all. I might have known. I might have known.

No, I’ve never seen the LaCava fellow, but I’ll try to one of these days. Donald Robinson is in another regiment and is not always in the same section that we are. When we get close enough I’ll try to look him up.

Can you find the name of the town Ted Shannon is in now? His sister might know exactly where. If so, let me know for I would like to visit him. Art Coladarci should be here also.

Some of the fellows managed to get to XXXXX [probably Naples] so I still have hopes. Any month now.

This is just a series of ramblings. The mutterings of senility.

And so to bed.

Love,
Son

Cartoon “The Prince and the Pauper”
April 6, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Have you read the item about the Red Cross on the inside of the back cover of the March issue of Reader's Digest? Well, don't you believe it. I've read some great tales about what the Red Cross accomplishes, and once I believed them, but I've begun to have my doubts. The only two things that I have seen them accomplish of any merit was the work they were doing at the P.O.E. and the large center in Oran. Twice have we seen doughnuts (one a piece); and the small cloth bags containing toilet articles and a few similar items which we received on the boat were made by local chapters and thus not paid for by the national organization. If our regimental Red Cross worker is any example they are not worth a damn, for we can seldom get him far enough away from XXXXX to even supply the aid station with magazines they supposedly distribute. I feel that the local organizations really are conscientious, but all the fellows feel that the organization as a whole really is a farce. What they do with their money I honestly cannot see. We certainly don’t see the results. As for those “smiling girls” – they do nothing but hand out a doughnut and disappear in one of the many excellent streamline autos the Red Cross has gathered to itself.

I believe the censors have been taking out those clippings you asked about because of regulations, but now we can definitely include them. I'm putting in one tonight that I have saved for several weeks.

I'm certainly glad some of my letters are coming through so quickly. Your reply to the note I sent, including the sketch I had made of the interior of the aid station, came so quickly that it didn’t seem possible you could have even received the letter. That really is service.

You think you’re glad that I’m not in the invasion section of Italy! You should see how glad I am. I'm especially pleased that I'm not near Buddy. That would be bad. Definitely.

No, the mirror you asked about it not old. Just a large modern one.

I've been reading a collection of short stories by Stephen Vincent Benét, and mighty fine they are. He really has a definite style, especially in telling stories of American history. Excellent “atmosphere pieces.” I think you would enjoy them.

Thanks for the Easter card. Very excellent timing.

Love,
Son

April 10, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I've been lax the last few days about writing, but I'll try to catch up tonight.

Last evening we had a good movie for a change – “Song of Bernadette.” Very, very excellent
acting. You can judge what the fellows thought about it when I tell you that everyone of the fellows sat through to three hour show in the pouring rain, for the theater is an open air affair.

Four hours later

To the movies again tonight. “The Male Animal” on the program tonight. Old but very good. That brings back nostalgic memories of the summer theater in New Milford when I saw the stage production. Also of Clara Quell and her tutoring the children of Elliot Nugent’s sister in Stamford. Just reminiscing.

I almost slept thru’ the Easter Sunday church service, but woke just in time to dash into the improvised choir and help with the special hymn. A very nice service with a large white cross as a background. Even purple iris in white “vases” (painted tin cans) for decoration. You at home could not have had a nicer setting.

I did miss the Easter lunch, however. Our white tent slept through noon until late in the afternoon blissfully snoozing through it all. We had been out all night, trying to sleep while sitting packed in trucks, and so took advantage of the chance to rest during the day. We woke Easter morning close enough to the front lines so we could see the mountains held by the Germans. They could have seen us too, if their glasses had been strong enough and we had not XXXXX before day was really upon us. You can still feel close and yet be a good many miles away.

I just had a cup of cocoa, steaming hot, right off the fire, made of cocoa bought in Danbury, Connecticut, U.S.A. (grocer’s name not yet revealed). A bit of cheese, too, from appropriated K rations. Just a midnight snack.

Danbury made the news in the Stars and Stripes today. Rose Wilder Lane and her continual protestations against the government’s rationing program even got overseas. I wish she would learn to keep her ideas to herself, for they really are pretty terrible. Less notoriety and a little more thinking on her part would help matters a great deal.

I’m still taking pictures – Italians in their chow lines, Italian pack trains heading toward the front, scenic views, etc. It will be a good long time before any negatives arrive, for they have to be developed and censored here before being sent home. I’m planning to have them mailed directly to you by the base censor, and have you get them printed home. Then mail the pictures to me. Don’t expect them for a good long time.

You can send me more cocoa when you have the chance. Also some powdered synthetic fruit juices. They are not especially good, but I’ve drunk so much lemon (for I’m one of the few that drinks it at all regularly. I have to have something to take the place of coffee. I’m still not a coffee addict. Only in really cold weather do I enjoy it. I’ll still go back to my milk diet when I return, so keep the refrigerator filled.

This army of ours is really a wonderful psychology laboratory. All types and puzzles of humanity wander about here, attempting to settle their problems in their own individual ways. And what a mess some of them make of themselves, and what messes other people make of their lives for them. Unfortunately, it is too often the parents of the poor souls that lead them astray. They mean well but how often they err. In the aid station we are using sodium amytal intravenously. It acts something like a “truth serum” in that while under its influence the patient will answer any questions that are put to him, and will begin to talk freely about things he has attempted to conceal in his mind. Mighty strange are some of the stories you hear, but it really gives you a great deal of satisfaction to see someone begin to bring himself about to be a much more normal human being. I’d certainly hate to have anyone get at me with that
amylta, however. Egad! The things they might learn if they asked the right questions! To think of my secret life laid bare for all to gloat over and manhandle & misinterpret. I must hold on and not let them see my wayward ways, note my peculiarities, talk over my weaknesses. They would never believe me if I told them I am the president visiting my troops incognito, would they? Well, I'll just keep that to myself. I don't want to be laughed at. Happy hallucinations!

Love,
Son (Franky D. to you)

Letter 182, 1944-04-11 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 20

April 11, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I hear rumors of ships arriving in Italy with a great deal of mail, so I'm looking forward to some letters and even a package or so this afternoon. I understand that air mail is flown to Africa and then carried by boat to Italy. Some must come directly here, however, for the sporadic quick-arriving letters come too fast for such a devious route. V-Mail probably comes directly to Naples.

The Italian children rally are very musically minded. I can hear a group of girls now singing some circle game across the highway. They don't sing it in the half timid self conscious manner of many American children, but sing out lustily and with really good feeling. Some boys have discovered that if they sing some of their favorite songs at chow time near the kitchens, they can reap sweet rewards of candy. These miniature Carusoes are not bad either, considering that they probably have had not one bit of musical training of any sort except the atmosphere they grew up in at home.

I had my big appointment today and muffed it. Not one order did I bellow out, not salute did I command. My big day, my momentous moment, my passing glance as a lieutenant – and an awe inspiring first looey at that – and I let it pass unheralded. In fact, I wasn't even cognizant of my sudden elevation until T/3 Singmaster accosted me as Lt. Warner. It seems that accidentally I picked up Lt. Singmaster's helmet liner in the dispensary and wandered off in full regalia, including a painted silver aiming stake on the helmet, but minus the collar bar. Did I go off in a secluded nook far from prying eyes? No, not me. I headed straight for the vicinity of the battalion C.P., the center of all battalion activity. Rescue came in time! I am not yet in the stockade for impersonating an officer. Praise Allah! Praise Allah!

No passes have yet put in their appearance. Dreams of Naples are still in the offing. Maybe not tomorrow, but soon. I hope.

Yes, I see Ulman once in a while; but inasmuch as he is in the second battalion while I am in the third, it is only once in a while. Allenbrook is in regimental headquarters company, so I see him with even less frequency.

Spring is really here now. The leaves of the olive trees are assuming an even greener green, and some of the trees are in blossom. A persistent bird of some yellow breasted clan has been flying into the tent looking for crumbs and flying out again. It is most comfortably warm. In
fact almost too hot. You know my preference for cold weather.

Try to send me another bottle of ink. It packed very well in the other package, but as I told you before, it ran off before I even unsealed it. Why ink should be so difficult to obtain I can’t understand. We aren’t supposed to use pens, I guess.

You must pick up some spicy rumors at home about when the war will end. Not that anyone’s guess merits any real attention, but it is rumor and hope that keeps us going. Either Nostradamus was wrong or we heard the incorrect interpretation. What if he did slip up by a few days. I’m still hoping he came close.

I received your note saying you had received my previous (and second) check. I appreciate hearing about it, for I like to keep account of such items. The money order should have arrived by the time you receive this.

More tonight if time permits.

Love,
Son

April 15, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

And thus my suggestion for bringing the war to a quick conclusion. Offer the Germany army the services of some of our generals, let them continue the practices of leadership they are now employing, and in a few weeks the morale of the Nazi supermen will be negative. I’m not referring to tactics, but to their method of attempting to treat their subordinates as automatons rather than as human beings, (even one time having been legally considered at least intelligent and men enough to be free thinking civilians)

An example. Our outfit moved into this most unfavorable bivouac site several days ago and set about to make it liveable. The hills on which the tents are pitched are so steep that many had to level off great areas within the tents so they can sleep without rolling down the hill. This was accomplished. Steps were dug into the hill side so that we can travel about without walking like a person with a game leg. This too they did. Wet areas were drained or oiled & overhanging brush along streams was cleared so that the malaria mosquitos would be hampered in its propagation. Roads were repaired. This and many more things did they do. The men were pleased and even the regimental commander was satisfied. Ah, but then came that God of men, that paragon of virtue, that leader of men (trained to lead men not to coerce them as they say the Germans do) – the grand inquisitor arrived and was greeted with quaking limbs and fearful hearts as any leader of an army composed of democratic citizens should be received. He philosophy (sic) of the trust and responsibility that can be pleased in his fellow men (though naturally they should be considered lower in the scale of human existence because they are not here joyfully or willingly, and have not as yet fritted away enough years to merit badges of honor and rank – or yet accumulated enough years to be nearing retirement – and pension) – but I have wandered - to the theme. He scowled and
growled in his own inimitable fashion, found someone with dirty nails, another without a hair cut, a bit of rust on a stove, messy tents (the men were still attempting to sleep following an all night problem), some water and scraps of paper in a slit trench. – and other similar examples of flagrant misconduct, called the entire company area unsatisfactory, and thus the battalion and thus the regiment (Your dog has fleas and so all dogs have fleas). A word of praise? A phrase of commendation? Egad no. That is not fitting psychology. Men work better when they realize nothing they do is appreciated. It is a stimulus for further activity. He accomplished his mission. Morale is now – 150. Long live the king! The king can do no wrong.

Is that the end? Oh, no. Definitely note. Now special courts martials have been instituted in each battalion area to try offenders who hamper the war effort by leaving a button unfastened, by having unpolished shoes. Sentries even stop jeeps passing along the highway to inspect the occupants.

An April 1 V-mail letter came tonight. Not too bad, but it looks as if there is a holdup somewhere again.

One of the fellows caught a ground mole just a few minutes ago, and a large, interested audience surrounded him. Of course, I’ve seen the mounds of their burrows, but have never before seen a mole itself. And can they dig! Honestly, in about two seconds he had half buried himself and would have completely disappeared but for the hold his captor had on his tail. They would make an excellent fur animal but for their size.

Fauna Italiana – II – a porcupine of sorts was brought into the aid station a few nights ago. A great night for experiment. We even used ethyl chloride to try to force it to unroll. Finally its host of fleas forces us to make it leave, but only after we had an opportunity to look it over really quite completely.

I’m reading “The Pocket History of the United States” in spurts. Reviewing my American history and even getting some new ideas – that I’m trying to remember. Darn, don’t I wish I could get back to studying again.

Just read Voltaire’s “Candide” – Not really for my taste. The French novelists of that period are not for my taste.

Love,
Son

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**Letter 184, 1944-04-17** (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 20

April 17, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I’ve been following the series of articles by Charles Beard in “Life” and feel I would like to have a copy of the book from which they are condensed. Sometime when it is convenient, buy “The Republic” and stack it away with my books so it will be handy when I want it. I believe it is only $3.00.

Air mail is arriving very slowly, but two V-mail letters, April 4 & 5, came this evening. Not too bad, but it does seem a long time between letters. No packages, of course.
I do enjoy the cocoa so send me another box when you pack my next travelling larder. It really isn’t bad eaten right out of the box with no water added—almost like powdered chocolate candy. If the cocoa does not melt easily, and I believe it does not, it would be a convenient way of carrying a candy substitute.

We’ve been giving shots again, but not too many were needed this time—thank heaven. Small pox here and there, a few typhoid and tetanus and a fair number of typhus. It didn’t take over a half hour to give the shots themselves, but I’ve spent all afternoon (with interruptions) simply recording the shots and straightening out the rest of the records – and I haven’t finished yet. Tomorrow, perhaps.

Let me give you a sample of the kind of infractions against the war effort that are being corrected by courts martial today. One fellow with whom I am acquainted is shortly to stand trial because the general found mud on his jeep. He had washed it the day before but had not yet washed it that particular day. And all this, as I understand it, was up, very near to the front. You explain it if you can. I never heard of such affairs. It is such things that makes life miserable, not the fact that you are living an enforced military existence, but such old maidish, finicky acts.

The horrible noises called singing that is going on around stop any sensible thoughts from flowing. They are forcing me to stop.

Love,
Son

April 17, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I have already written one short note to you tonight, but because it was so noisy in the tent at the time, I’m afraid it wasn’t much of a letter. However, I calmed myself by going to the movies, held in the open & Since the show was only a fair “western”, I came back by myself and am writing again in the quietness of a deserted tent—lying on my stomach and resting on my elbows on my blankets and shelter half.

You have asked me several times just what I do. No, it isn’t a military secret, but it is difficult to describe my activities. Of course you know that I am in the aid station proper, just as I was all through manoeuvres. Everyone in the aid station does whatever needs to be done at a particular time, all just pitching in and doing their parts. Some of us do have jobs that ordinarily we alone are responsible for, however, and mine seems to be caring for the records. This involves recording patients seen and what was done for them; filling out E.M.T.s (emergency medical tags) that accompany the men to the hospitals; keeping an account of men in the hospital (and which hospital if possible) and when they return to duty, die or are transferred; caring for the companies sick books; checking immunization records; and doing any other work of a similar nature. I also have fallen heir to the job of seeing that the necessary supplies are available and knowing where they can be found in the jumble of boxes.
and chests we always somehow manage to acquire despite all earnest resolutions to cut down our equipment to a more manageable minimum. Then too, when a patient comes in, I like to help out in the patching up job we do. All in all, I'm just a handy man, running about wildly with my hands full of papers and pens, frantically looking for a jar of this or a tube of that that walked away since I last had my hands on it, while at the same time trying to paint someone with “athlete's foot,” or giving someone a shot in the arm.

I don't believe I've even written much about the military life here in Italy, because I honestly know very little about it. However, I will try to give you some idea of what goes on.

Wherever you travel here you see soldiers. They are living in the houses in the villages and cities, they are camped in olive groves and open fields, in little plots of land along the roadside, by bridges, on hill sides – everywhere. The highways are jammed with army vehicles and M.P.'s direct the traffic. Mile after mile of land along the roadways is lined with military installations of every conceivable kind – engineers, bath units, hospitals (several within two or three miles), tanks, artillery, quartermaster – hundred and hundreds of men in every square mile.

For the few men who actually see the front lines, there are thousands who never come anywhere near them. There is quite a discussion going on in the columns of the Stars and Stripes concerning a bonus of some sort for those who actually do the fighting, because so many here are in little or no danger of life and limb while a comparative few, receiving the very same pay, are in constant danger in the front lines.

The flash of the artillery can be seen for miles, even when the guns are out of sound range. Tonight I could see the bright flash of light behind the nearby hills, and even hear the occasional rumble and boom as the shells left the guns.

We have every evidence that the air war is still going strong, for every day formations go winging toward XXXXXXXXX. Thank heavens the Germans can’t do the same, for otherwise we never could live so much in ease and in such safety within such a short distance of the fighting.

Love,
Son

April 21, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

We have moved into a house for an aid station again, rather than resorting to a tent. We are just as well pleased for a stone house is much more satisfactory than one of canvas, despite the slight annoyance of mice and a sundry assortment of bugs and insects. We can hear the mice nibbling away in the corner or slipping down into a hole behind the medical chest. The insects just crawl. That's enough.

We had a stage show the other night that was really a wow! The music was fair, the dancing not good. The comedians, so-so, but the impromptu entertainment that the company unknowingly gave us was a typical example of many Italians today. After one of the numbers some one tossed a couple of cellophane wrapped candies up on the stage, evidently trying for a laugh. Some one else took up his idea, until after each number and even during them, the performers were showered with candy and cigarettes. They were so worried that they...
wouldn’t get what was meant for them that at times they would stop in the middle of their act to grab wildly for a flying candy or a sailing cigarette. When the tokens missed the actor himself and slid on toward the orchestra, the musicians would scramble madly. The pianist might stop, pick up a piece of candy and return to his playing at the point in the music which the rest of the players had then reached. Sometimes a whole theme would be missing for three or four bars while the violinist and trumpet players reached for the same package of cigarettes. Just like children at a peanut hunt. I thought the farmers in the country and the poor of the cities would probably be the only ones who would show their lust (in public) for these scarce luxuries, but it isn’t so.

I received your box containing the Easter egg today. From your letters it appears that several packages have not yet arrived. I also received a small box of those excellent chocolate covered nuts from Miss Todd.

At last I have received one copy of Newsweek. Others should come along now.

I’m including a few clippings that I want you to save for me. Just little items from Time that I want for reference.

I’m reading Tortilla Flat now. I keep planning to work on my history but the other books keep intriguing me; for I hope to keep my little pocket history with me and the others may not always be available. Always excuses. Most likely, however, my difficulty is enough solitude for any real concentration.

Love,
Son

[clippings from Time follow.]

Letter 186, 1944-04-22 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 20

April 22, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I remember thinking at one time how much I architecturally disliked the Spanish style fireplaces, the mantle & chimney of which hang out into the room. Now that I have seen them put into practice I find that they really are not bad at all. Practically all the Italian homes have one or more fireplaces, and often times they are constructed in that style that I had always thought of as Spanish. Our latest aid station has one of these, and as I sit here writing the fire is snapping away merrily – just the thing to take off the chill in the breezy April evening. It’s surprising how comfortable we are able to make ourselves – a fire, electric lights, and even native chairs. Our life here really is much better in many respects than while we were sweating out the summer in Louisiana. And to think it is I who am admitting this – after all my effortless protesting.

The rafters of our house are infested with termites who delight in nothing better than a tasty morsel of Italian food. You would hardly believe those little ants could raise such a row. They sound like a rustic oaf chewing a mouthful of sticky candy – with his mouth expanding wide open with every bite.

The Italians went to great effort to hide many of their possessions from the Germans and
probably from us. Today one of our vino addicts indulged in a treasure hunt for some of the
Italian wine. I looked up from my reading and saw him on his hands and knees pawing the
ground like a dog. He had found a horde which the former owners of the house had buried in
the yard – bottles of wine that he broke while attempting to extricate them, a crock of olives,
a jar of olive oil, pottery and great flasks of wheat apparently set aside for planting on their
expected return. Someone had been there before, for we also found broken bottles and gaping
holes that our predecessors had left.

Apparently some in the army think that the medics should aid them in everything, not just
for their physical ills. Today an eighty five year old Italian woman was picked up by one of our
men (not a medic); and she explained that she had escaped from a nearby city that is being
heavily plastered by our artillery and mortars. Some were killed and wounded trying to escape
with her, but she somehow managed to get over to our lines still carrying the heavy bundle of
personal possessions she had started with. She was questioned, of course, and then, because
they apparently never met up with a situation of that sort before, dumped her on the medics
with the flimsy excuse that they wanted her examined to see if she were capable of walking
to the section that is for prisoners of war. Then they thought that we should see that she got
there. We refused their kind offers despite their protests and at length we saw to it that it was
not our jeep that took her away. But that is a long involved story of telephone calls, visits to
C.P.’s and the like. At length the M.P.’s came and did their job.

While she was still with us, we inveigled some of the fellows who speak Italian to talk to
her. She sat on a chair with her bundle near by and whispered prayers to herself to keep up
her courage. Scenes like that really touch me. This thin, wrinkled almost toothless old lady,
with her straggling gray hair bound up with a black kerchief, sat and with many gestures told
her experiences – the ruins of the city, their treatment by the Germans, her escape and the
wounding and killing of her friends. When we offered her food she refused at first, explaining
that she was so frightened she couldn’t eat. Anything that sounded like a shell made her start.
Even one of our planes flying over terrifically excited her. When it was explained that now she
was safe and had nothing to fear she nimbly (for these Italians are spry even in old age) knelt
down and kissed the ground to show how glad she was to be on Allied held soil.

I snapped a picture of her talking, when my negatives arrive I know you will be able to
pick it out.

The fields about here are blazing with flowers, mostly yellows, purples and reds. Today I
picked a small bouquet of the first wild poppies I have ever seen. No, it isn’t Flanders fields,
but they are beautiful.

I have found a way of evading the general. I’ll put on a pair of shorts, roll down my socks
to the tops of my shoes, take off my helmet and perhaps my shirt or borrow a coat from the
mule skinners and pass myself off as an Italian soldier. If the general accosts me, I’ll salute
smartly and stand looking at him with my usual stupid expression and he will think I don’t
understand him so I don’t see why I should begin now.

Fireplaces have their draw backs, don’t they? Ours is smoking and my eyes are smarting.
Time to close, I fear.

We just finished a delicious repast of ham spread, anchovy paste, chicken and cocoa. (Lt.
Singmaster received a package). Wonderful, wonder. Now I can retire (despite the rubber
Dear Mother & Dad,

I have just been reading an article in Colliers about Saint Cabrini, “The First American Saint.” A few days ago I enclosed a picture of an Italian saint in one of my letters but I can’t recall the name I wrote on the back. Is it the same? I thought you might like to see one of the many religious relics of which the Catholics are so fond.

I know this is a difficult request but see what you can do. Will you please try to buy a small, inexpensive camera that can be carried fairly easily and mailed without great difficulty, and one for which you can get film. A box camera is too large. Try to find a folding one of a size that will permit your to get plenty of film. I really would like a camera that would be the size of the film you have been sending me, but a good one of that sort is quite expensive and I fear it may become lost in the mail. Just an ordinary camera will do for the present.

We have just received today’s mail and mine consisted of a V-mail letter from dad. And of course there were the two minor items of a box from you and one from Martha containing the Easter egg you wrote about. Yours contained the parlay’s potato sticks, raisins, etc. Very good, very good. Keep them rolling off the production line. Cocoa is always good and also include some kind of synthetic fruit flavoring – preferably not lemon. I really don’t like the stuff but it is much better than a continuous diet of chlorinated water. I got so that I could drink coffee when the weather was really cold, but now it isn’t quite so palatable. Various spread for cracker “sandwiches” are good & ham, cheese spread, jelly, peanut butter, chicken or tongue, etc. I would prefer fairly small cans (similar to those that I received in packages from Mildred and you), for once they are opened it is necessary to finish the contents. I prefer several snacks to one enormous orgy.

I can’t remember whether or not I thanked Mildred for the package she sent to me. I believe I did, however. Has she ever said anything about it?

The pecan egg you sent was the best, the very best candy I have had in months. It was superbly delicious. Is it possible to buy more similar to that? Everyone raved about it, licked his chops and drooled for more.

This letter seems to center about food so I’ll add a foot note on the same topic. We just finished breakfast – menu: coffee, pancakes, butter, peach jam, bacon and cereal. Not bad you must admit.

In my last letter I wrote about an old Italian woman who had recently crossed the German lines. Later the rest of the living friends who had started out also came to the aid station, one severely wounded in the stomach by a shell fragment. We seem to cater to the fleeing, refugee Italian trade.

Love,
Son
I enjoyed listening to the intelligence officer question the old woman. It is surprising how much information they are able to gather about German held positions by piecing together a little bit here and a little there. Some of her references set me to guessing, for naturally I wasn't acquainted with the region and situation she was talking about, but the mention of German helpers among the Italian Quislings really piqued my interested [sic]. I'd like to hear the whole story some time.

They tell me that many of the Poles who are being forced to fight for the Germans are voluntarily surrendering to the Allies. Of course we are not near enough to see all this happening, but it does sound reasonable. With the pounding I know they are taking, I should think they would all surrender. How I wish they would.

Love,
Son

Letter 188, 1944-04-25 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 20

April 25, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I had a landslide of mail today, three air mail letters from you folks, and a copy of Time & Newsweek. One of the letters contained the pictures you took in Brookfield. Some of them came out very well.

I have checked on the war bonds for the period you asked about and learned that you should have received two bonds and a check for $10.00. Let me know if that checks with your accounts.

I found a good, simple map of the Italian battle line that I thought you might like to have it. I probably could give you a little more information than is there, but not much. You probably hear more about what is going on at the front than we do.

After all my plans for avoiding the general, I bumped smack into him yesterday. I was standing near a tree by the aid station talking to a reporter from the Stars & Stripes (who incidentally was attempting to interview me about poetry – of all things) when up stalked “Snuffy”- his two stars on the helmet blazing in tarnished glory. Of course I had my helmet off and a pocket unbuttoned, two cardinal sins in the commander's eyes, but I made the best of it and popped my head piece quickly into place. He walked directly up in front of me so I snapped to what was supposed to be attention, saluted and said “yes sir” intermittently throughout his little pep talk. He tried to convince me that what we learn in the army is valuable, and a lot of other bull, but I'm still not satisfied. I know I'd make out better, much better at home.

It's too bad you didn't go to the circus for you would have felt right at home. At least I hope you get your balloon.

The weather really has become quite hot, too hot in my opinion. Not just warm but hot enough to raise a sweat. And I don't like that. I'm still willing to take the arctic regions.

You should see our comforts of civilization. We have a shower made of a five gallon can, a
Letter 189, 1944-04-29

April 29, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Another package came today full of the usual excellent food supply – potato chips, boul-

dlion cubes & packets –candy –(chocolate and jelly) etc. I’ve already munched down most of

a box of potato sticks. I honestly don’t need all the stuff I am getting for we are fed amply

enough even if the cooking and quality of food is not the best. It is the variety in diet that

makes the food from home so welcome.

If it doesn’t cut into your ration points too deeply, I would like more sardines and any other

similar canned meats and fish and sandwich spreads. I just thought – pickles would be fine if

they will let you send them. You really make excellent choices so you do the selecting.

I’m including a few clippings from the Stars & Stripes that you may enjoy.

The latest letters I have received were V-Mails dated the 17th. Air mail at times seems to

get held up along the way.

I’m hoping to get a copy of some of the propaganda leaflets the Germans send over the

front lines. I’ve seen one sheet and pretty poor propaganda it is. It doesn’t move even the most

moveable of men for it is too childishly simple – something about American troops selling

apples after the war just as they did after World War I. I have asked one of the fellows who is

up in the front where they are falling to get one for me if he can.

Please send me some more paper similar to this that I am using. I think that often the

lighter letters travel more quickly.

I’m still keeping busy ordering supplies and keeping the records somewhat in order and

that takes a surprisingly long time.

I wrote Jim a four page letter yesterday so that should satisfy him for a little. I haven’t

heard from Martha in a good long while. Perhaps her letters have become lost on the way, for

I do know that several letters Jim wrote to me have never arrived. I imagine the same thing

has happened to some of yours.

Chaplain Newman and Lt. Singmaster are most busy this morning –playing chess. Captain

Stratman, after fortifying himself with sodium amytal, has marched off to the dentist to have

his teeth filled. He doesn’t like to have his teeth drilled any more than I do.

Love,
Son

[Newspaper clipping, “New Italian Battle Line: Battle Line as of April 15” inserted with this letter.]
More later.

Love,
Son

[Two Mauldin cartoons follow as well as a clipping from Stars & Stripes about soldier poets.]

May, 1944

Cartoon, 1944-05-08 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 21

[Mauldin cartoon dated May 8, 1944. Two combat soldiers being denied entry to various clubs because they don’t have all their buttons. Caption reads: “Them buttons was shot off when we took dis town.”]

Letter 190, 1944-05-01 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 21

May 1, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

It is strange, the order in which letters reach us here. Last evening I received a letter from Don Thomsen postmarked April 25 and a letter from you folks dated the 21st. Some of the quickest mail so far.

Don seems quite upset that people may think it queer that he too is not in the army. I can understand how he feels and I do hope it doesn’t get him down, for it is nothing he can help. As a matter of fact, he is darn lucky not to be in.

Yes, the films you sent arrived. I hope you received my request for an inexpensive camera of my own. The films arrived toward the end of March and so you see first class packages come very quickly.

No, don’t send my license back to me. Just renew it and keep it home.

The two sets of five cent stamps also reached me safely.

I guess we can’t be too hard on the Red Cross, despite all the shortcomings. I understand the packages that they are sending to the prisoners in Germany are very, very excellent. One of their worthwhile projects.

Leave it to John Mac to write such crap. His ideas are so excellent but so hypocritical. How can he do it?

Where in heaven’s name did you pick up the name “Word Hunt”? I never heard of such a boat but I am interested to know how you even picked up a name of that sort. On neither crossing did I even see such a vessel.

I see you are becoming an imitator of Gertrude Stein. To prove it I’ll quote from a recent letter: “It didn’t rain the next day after all the babies were out but skipped a day as it didn’t rain until today.”

I’m so glad you received the cameos. They are not particularly good ones but will pass in the dark. If and when I manage to get to Naples I will get you a really good cameo as well as a few more inexpensive ones for Martha & Mildred. Do you think grandma would like one also?

You would enjoy seeing our latest aid station guests. We have three very young kittens
mewling and squawking in a wooden box—potential mice traps if you wish. Two have finally
condescended to open their eyes, but eyes or no eyes they continually mawl each other or
step on each other’s heads, trying to clamber up the sides of the box. They are being fed by
a medicine dropper system based upon an empty vaccine bottle, its rubber cap pierced by a
needle emptying into a rubber tube.

Oh yes, we’ve tapped in on an electric system one of the nearby companies has set up. Real
light bulbs with generator current.

Love,
Son

Letter 191, 1944-05-02 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 21

May 2, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I’m enclosing a clipping from yesterday’s Stars and Stripes that will give you a fairly good
picture of the atmosphere in many of the towns through which the war has passed. All of Italy
is dotted with towns of this sort, and the writer has done a good job of suggesting, without
going into details, of the chaos left behind.

I did a bit of washing this morning, but it was not a great success. My flannel shirt really
needed a scrubbing and scrub though I did, the grease and dirt failed to be released. When
the G.I. laundry begins to function, I’ll toss them the job. May they have more success than I.

I’m catching up a little on my reading again. The Pocket Mystery was lying about and I
discovered some interesting articles concerning detective stories—some very clever ones, too.

I also borrowed a copy of “Come In,” a collection of poems by Robert Frost from Ulman,
which I saw him recently. Frost is one of my favorites, you know,—a real New England poet,
though his poetry has a universal flavor.

I’m trying to convince Capt. Stratman that he should recommend me for reclassification to
be returned to the U.S., but he is hard to convince. If you could only mail me some of your
fresh strawberry pie or dark chocolate cake, I perhaps could bribe him with that. Potato sticks
don’t seem to do the trick.

Our present aid station has a super abundance of distracting noises, especially for one who
is trying to read or write – people talking (it seems as if we have hundreds of visitors a day)
– 3 kittens squawling, - the termites munching noisily on the wooden rafters – buzzing flies –
the filed organ bellowing out or accompanied by howling voices – planes growling over head,
- birds chirping outside. Each is not bad alone, but at times when they commit the error, the
unbearable error, of raising their voice in chorus, the results are amazing. Even six aspirin fail
to relieve the agony.

Everyone is malaria conscious here these days, for “Ann”, that vicious, blood sucking
mosquito is up in arms again. With her sharpened spear, she speeds about like a blood hound,
smelling out a victim. (Poetic, Gee!) And you know my fatal attraction for blood hounds – I
mean mosquitoes. Every day we take a bitter yellow pill of atebrine, a quinine substitute, to
ward off the symptoms, so I hope that will do the trick.
Time for lunch. Even a letter won’t wait for that.

Love,
Son

Cartoon, 1944-05-01 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 21
[Mauldin cartoon, dated May 1, 1944: A major and a brigadier general are sitting behind sandbags and near a cemetery. The major says: “Let’s go to Naples. I know a corporal with a nice apartment.”]

Letter 192, 1944-05-04 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 21

May 4, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,
I received a wind fall last evening, nine letters in all. It did seem so good to get all that news from home.

Yes, you have received all the money I have sent so far and before long you can expect another check – when we get paid again.
I also received my driver’s license, stamps, and several air mail envelopes as well as a good many news clippings.
The shots I was telling you about were simply stimulating doses. We all get them ever so often. I wasn’t due yet and won’t be for quite some time.
Yes, my scissors are still with me. In fact the whole original toilet kit is still intact with a few minor substitutions.
Thanks a great deal for those addresses. With the A.P.O. numbers I may perhaps be able to contact some of them.
So you think you didn’t need the neck tie for Easter? Well, I see you got one anyway. Shall I reveal the secret that the dish cost only 29¢ or do you still want to pass it off as a $2.90 item.
How is the teeth situation coming along or are you still pulling the same old gags. You must take care of that, you know.
Those censors of mine are pulling that old stuff again of taking out the most interesting clippings from my letters. You have been able to guess correctly most of the censored words, but when they snitch whole clippings – well, I’m up in arms. I’m going to write to the president about this – Freedom of speech, freedom of press and all that. I’m saving them to slip to when I can get them through. I’ll do it, you know.
I went caving the other day and was led to a small limestone cave that some of our fellows are living in. There are not enough houses to go around so the boys make use of all kinds of protective shelters. I rescued for myself some small stalactites and will send them home sometime for my mineral collection. I felt like Tom Sawyer searching his way through his Mississippi River cave as I peered about by the feeble light of a flickering candle.
Captain Stratman and Chaplain Newman are bombarding the M Company C.P. next door with stones propelled by their sling shots. To keep themselves amused they have constructed
sturdy sling shots made of discarded plasma set tubing, a wooden crutch & a bit of leather. Their aim is only fair, but if they send over enough harassing fire they usually force the M company personnel out into the open. Last evening, after issuing an ultimatum that was ignored, Capt. Hotchkiss counter attacked with a real grenade. Capt. Stratman turned practically green trying to dash out of the way and dug a furrow as his thrashing feet cut away at the dirt. Capt. Hotch pulled the pin, it smapped and, he let the grenade fly. By then our side was beating a routish retreat with the terrified non combatant captain (suddenly turned martial) leading the withdrawal. With a deadly lurch it rolled up to our sandbags and emitted a miserable little “pop” – Capt. Hotchkiss had removed all the powder. Today I heard rumors of a secret weapon they are planning, but out S-2 has been unable to confirm the report.

The M Company cooks concocted a cake of cereal, coffee grounds, tobacco, onions, and chopped pieces of G.I. soap resembling nuts and frosted it with Barbasol shaving cream. Then, these jokesters wrapped the cake in paper labelled saying it had come from one of the officers wives, attached used stamps and sent it to the officer who divided it amongst his men. Thinking this bit of cooking had come from home, he attempted to force down a piece, but finally gave up and wrote a very picturesque letter home to his wife. When he learned the truth he frantically raced to the mail box to retrieve the letter before it got off to his wife. I’m sure she wouldn’t have appreciated it. Most likely it would have served as grounds for divorce.

Lt. Singmaster is trying to force me into a psycho neurotic state. My bed is by a gaping hole in the wall that is the entrance to the oven here in the aid station. Every evening before retiring he flashes his light into the deep set oven and warns me that I too should inspect it to make sure that a “feathery claw” doesn’t reach out during the night and haul me away. I’m keeping my axe handy.

I had a long letter from Divvy last evening and I was most surprised to hear from her so soon. I think she was quite intrigued by my mention of the use of sodium amytal in treating war exhaustion cases.

Each of us received a bottle of cocoa cola today, one of the few we have had since coming here. I wish there were some way of carrying powdered coke or root beer. Why don’t you try dehydrating it. It would make a good activity to keep you busy.

9:15. I think I’ll read a bit and retire early to catch up with the sleep I lost last evening.
Good night.

Love,
Son
of work, not in the least convincing. If this is an example of the caliber of writing that was used to sell the Fascist principles to the German populace, it shows the mass of Germans have an unusually low mental age in regard to such matters. Our fellows seem only to laugh at these papers and collect them as souveniers. It is just a waste of effort and paper as far as the war is concerned.

We have a vase of unusually large beautiful roses at the aid station this evening. Someone found them growing in a deserted flower garden and brought them to the aid station for us to enjoy. If we bought them at home they would cost several dollars a dozen. See, there's nothing like the army after all. Or is there?

Love,
Son

Letter 194, German propaganda (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 21
[two inserts of German propaganda]

Letter 195, postcards (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 21
Two postcards
Caption 1: Taken from top of Lovers Leap.
Caption 2. Rapids above the bridge at Lovers Leap.

Letter 196, 1944-05-08 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 21

May 8, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm enclosing another of the propaganda sheets that you might give to Martha if you think she would like it. I haven't heard from her in weeks.

Last evening I received a letter dated April 30th, and I call that excellent time. Other letters are still straggling in, however.

The garden proposition sounds good to me. What are you planning to raise? If you don't wear yourselves out tending it, I know it will do you good. Do you think I'll be home in time to have some of the fresh vegetables? Golly, I hope so. Some of the gardens around here have onions, string Italian onions and occasionally we make use of them. There also are plenty of artichokes, but we haven't tried them yet.

We have received a new supply of overseas editions and some of the titles are very good. Even “The Robe” has been published in these type books.

Both Time & Newsweek are coming very regularly now. I certainly am glad I had get them for me, for even though Stars and Stripes come every night, they only give a smattering of news. They come first class mail (magazines), and though they are often late everyone reads them through and through.

I took a cool shower this afternoon, as well as a sunbath. It is almost like vacationing,
sitting about in the sun in the Italian countryside.

Remember the clipping you sent me regarding the road side courts martial here in Italy? Well, they don’t “grin and bear it” as the heading suggested, they just bear it, and then only because they have to. Everyone considers that to be just a lot of tommy rot, and I honestly can’t see how it accomplishes much of anything worthwhile.

Lt. Singmaster has posted the following sign outside our Aid Station.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Ships</th>
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<tr>
<td>Here</td>
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<td>P.S.</td>
<td>for Daily</td>
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<td>Better and</td>
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<td>Be good! Section</td>
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</table>

I applied, but my application apparently wasn’t satisfactory. I’m working on a new one now, however, and I think I may be able to bluff it through.

Martin Betonio, of our T/4’s has made for himself a G.I. guitar – a tin can for the body and wooden neck and pegs. Lacking frets, he uses a small empty bottle and has managed to construct a pick of sorts. Martin is a Filipino and has inherited an innate liking for Oriental tone qualities. At least I’ll credit him with that. What else could account for the fact that each note is just slightly but miserably flat? It’s a lot of fun anyway.

I am returning some of the pictures you have sent me for I can’t carry all of them on my person. It isn’t that I don’t enjoy them, but my bulging pockets will hold just so much. I’ll spread them out through various letters, to lighten the weight that would otherwise be in one only.

Love,
Son

Letter 197, 1944-05-13 (back to Table of Contents)

13 May 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I’ve been rather busy during the past couple of days, so I have slipped up again on my correspondence. You’ll excuse me I know.

I’ve been reading “The Late George Apley”, but haven’t delved into it deeply enough yet to say much about its value. It begins very well, however.

You probably know more about the progress of the war than we do. We hear rumors of a lot of activity in the invasion areas but have received no confirmation. Apparently there is a great deal of activity on the Italian front also.

We have a couple of mule skinners (Italian) with us now, attached to the battalion aid station to help us carry equipment if we should need it. They are very likeable fellows and
we manage to converse with them with the aid of one of our fellows who can talk Spanish fluently.

Our aid station is once again a considerable distance from the kitchen so we are attempting our own cooking from cans again. Not too bad. I've even reached the point of toasting bread on a fork over our gas stove, and making cheese sandwiches from canned cheese which doesn't melt.

The invasion has begun! Seven waves of troops have landed already! True? I don't know, but I do hope so. That's the latest rumor I just picked up over the phone. That blasted thing keeps ringing and interrupting my letter writing, but if it were out of order, I would gripe too. Maybe the war will be over soon.

I haven't heard from Martha regarding her engagement so I haven't written to her yet about it. When she writes, I'll send her my best wishes then. You often wondered if it would come off, and Mort didn't disappoint her—not yet. I know you don't thoroughly approve, but that doesn't matter much I guess.

The 8 ounce package arrived today containing the razor blades and film. I'm getting one film developed here, I hope, and when they come I'll send the negatives for you to have printed. The camera I was using is now back in the hands of the owner, so I'm minus camera. I hope you are able to get one for me, for I really can use it.

I still have some sardines left but I would like another package—Here are some suggestions—(sardines, sandwich spreads, crackers, chocolate candies, cookies, fruit cake, jam, nuts—*but*, food, food of any kind.)

The lights are getting dim & we are finding it necessary to start our gas lantern. I'll try to write more when daylight comes around again.

Love,
Son

---

Dear Mother & Dad,

I suppose you have been reading about all the excitement now going on here in Italy. I hope it means that before too long it will force the whole German war machine to collapse. I was talking to a fellow yesterday who recently escaped from behind German lines and he said that many of the Jerries themselves feel that the war will be over in June. That most likely is too good to be true, but a little optimism surely helps now and then.

I have been receiving your letters quite regularly now, but still no letters from Martha. I received the clipping you sent concerning her engagement.

You only have to be in Italy a short time to learn that this truly is a world war. Recently I've seen all types of North African troops passing along the highways, wearing open toed sandals, knitted leggings and striped wollel robes. To facilitate walking they tuck the robes up into their belts. Each has a long queue of hair in the belief that if he is killed in battle his God will
carry him to heaven by means of this braided fixture. The French officers who command these native troops also assume the same uniform, except that they wear G.I. shoes and leave off the beard and special hair do. These troops have beautifully groomed horses and mules upon which they depend almost completely for transportation.

Perhaps you remember my telling you about our mule skinners. By means of signs and my limited Italian I discovered that one of them really is a Jugoslav who was forced into the Italian army, but whose relatives still are fighting with Tito’s army.

Recently I found a pack like that carried by officers and artillery men and have appropriated it for my own use. I cut extra straps off another discarded pack I discovered and made it portable. Despite all the jibes saying that I’m trying to be an officer, I’m still planning to use it, for it is much more convenient for carrying all my junk than is the complicated mess of straps and buckles that constitutes a regular infantry man’s pack.

I do hope you can manage to get a camera of some sort. If you do, ship it off immediately by first class mail. My that means it should arrive in a fairly short time. There are a great many shots I would like to get but am missing because a camera isn’t available.

The Italian refugees are pouring out of the villages which the Allies have recently captured. Apparently they are being evacuated immediately, for they are carried through here on all sorts of vehicles complete with bundles and baskets, bags, kettles, dogs, babies and even bicycles. They have carried every thing they can as well as a great deal more than I would carry. Most of them look extremely worn and hungry, and glad to be free from German rule.

There isn’t much I can tell you about now; for now I have been in Italy several months there is not a great deal more I can describe freely. Why don’t you ask some questions to help me along. I can tell you practically anything you ask except exactly where I am located.

As ever,

Love Son

Clippings from Stars & Stripes (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 21
[Several news clippings from Stars & Stripes—seem to focus on Santa Maria Infante]

Letter 199, 1944-05-20 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 21

May 20, 1944
Sqd. 1, Class 44F
L.J. A.A.F.
La Junta, Colo.

Dear Trum:

Received your long letter of April 28th, and you are right about air mail, it really is much faster.

Your word picture of life on the front, was very interesting. I can just picture you sneaking across the street with bullets helping you on your way. What I can’t understand though, is how you manage to pack so much in your letters without ever being bothered by censors! I have
yet to receive a letter from you that has been cut up in any way, and you are always able to
give me excellent descriptions, so what goes on—you have a few friends in the censor dept.?

I have sent on the copy of “Arundel,” and just as soon as I can find the particular copy of
Gilbert & Sullivan selections that I am looking for, you shall have it also. It is a lucky thing
that you wrote the request of “Arundel” on the end of one page, and the request for G. & S. in
the beginning of another. When I mailed the book, they stamped the first page of your letter,
thus making the request null & void. However, the 2nd page is not stamped, so we have fooled
them there.

As far as I understand it, Bill Ellis is to have a complete medical course at Johns Hopkins.
He is one of the few who came through A.S.T.P. [Army Specialized Training Program]a with
high enough marks to warrant this chance. I give him plenty of credit, because he was at a
disadvantage, in that he didn’t have adequate background in many of the subjects he had to
study at the Citadel.

I had a letter from Ed on April 10th. His new address is:
Pvt. Ed Gallagher 11094593
398th Inf. Col
A.P.O. #447
Ft. Bragg, N.C.

It looks kind of bad with the A.P.O. number and everything. As yet I haven’t answered his
letter, but intend to as soon as I finish yours.

Trum—I have been “washed out.” Yeah, one month to those bars and wings and I wash
out! I guess I don’t have to tell you what it feels like because you’ve been around too much
not to know. The hardest part of the whole business was to tell the folks about it. I know my
Dad was pretty disappointed. I suppose I may as well go back to the beginning and tell you
exactly what happened and the way it happened?

In the first place, La Junta is just about the only advanced base in the U.S. where they fly
combat ships in advanced Training! The ship we fly here is the B-25, (3400 horsepower) which
is an awful big jump from the 450 H.P. A.T. !? that we flew at Lemoore, and fly in twin engine
advanced. At any rate, on my solo flight in the B-25, I misjudged an approach to landing, hit
the top of a dirt pile at the end of the runway, and sheared off the right landing gear. On top of
that, the whole hydraulic system went out with the gear. In other words, after we had climbed
to 10,000 ft. we found that we not only had one wheel gone, but that we couldn’t get the
other wheel up. It is practically suicide to try and land a heavy plane like that on one wheel,
so we prepared to jump. As a last resort, we tried the hand pump. We didn’t expect it to
work because we had lost all of our hydraulic fluid, so you can imagine our amazement when
after a few futile pumps, the thing suddenly took hold, and the wheel started to come up. We
called the tower and told them about it, and they advised us to come in for a belly landing.
Our tanks were full of high octane gas and in the 25 there is no provision for getting rid of it,
so that meant we would have a fire hazard. While we had been circling the field, word had
gotten around about our predicament, and when we finally did make a pass at the field, there
must have been about 3,000 people watching from the top of hangars, mess halls, airplanes, &
anything they could stand on. I was told afterward that some of the officers when they found
out this was our first solo ride were betting two to one against us. Can you imagine betting
on a thing like that? At any rate we landed the plane. My Co-pilot received a few bumps and
bruises and I didn’t even get a scratch. The plane was demolished! In fact they put it on the
scrap pile! That's the story Trum, and where I go from here, I don't know, but I'm too happy to be alive to be bitter. Maybe I'll be seeing you over there. God knows with luck like mine, I belong in the front lines.

I'll be having time on my hands from now on, so I'll be writing more often. Here's wishing you luck, and keep out of harms way? Write soon?

Jimmie

P.S. They “washed” the Co pilot too!
P.P.S. Not even the experts can figure out how we managed to get the wheel up. The only way they can explain it, is that a hydraulic line must have pinched together when I sheared the wheel off, and held enough fluid to get the wheel up.

\textsuperscript{6}The Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) was a military training program instituted by the United States Army during World War II to meet wartime demands both for junior officers and soldiers with technical skills. Conducted at more than 222 American universities, it offered training in such fields as engineering, foreign languages, and medicine. Wikipedia

Letter 200, 1944-05-25 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 21

Dear Mother & Dad,

It has been a good many days now since I have written, but don't let that worry you, for I'm still going strong. It probably will be several days more until I can mail this note, but I'm beginning it now while I have the time. I just can't write as often as I wish, but you can be sure I will whenever I can.

Poor Mussolini certainly had a problem on his hands. Talk about New England being rocky and not conducive to agriculture. In the mountains of Italy (and most of Italy is mountainous except for a few vallies [sic]) the land is so rocky that I honestly believe that I haven't taken two successive steps without stepping on stones. During that past few days I've practically worn through my combat shoes and ordered another pair this evening. If they don't arrive soon I'll be running about bare footed like many of the natives. Even high in the tiny farm areas near the mountain peaks the land has to be terraced, the grain crops are beautifully green, however, but it must take an enormous amount of manual labor to make the land at all productive.

I just had a tasty morsel—a small bite of carrier pigeon. They were dropped from a plane and the parachute failed to open killing four, injuring two and leaving two available for message bearing. The boys were hungry so they pounced on the birds as a source of food and induced some of the Italian women to fry them. The grease spots are what remained after I licked my fingers.

Our aid station is located in a house high on a mountain top on a rough trail that apparently leads from practically everywhere. At least, practically everyone in the mountains seems to pass by here sometime during the day or night. The door is almost as busy as Times Square on a Saturday evening, and the noise is close to that of an Oriental bazaar.

The owners of the house are still living alone, but have moved to another section of the
house. Our room is the point of entry to the rest of the house and the whole family (or families,
I can't tell which) parade through hourly, investigating our activities and noting what these
strange Americans are doing."

I once believed the Italian nation to be quite progressive, but I have discovered that much
of these modern improvements are only superficial. During the past few weeks I've been
sightseeing in some of the very isolated sections of the Italian mountain regions. Remember
my writing about

May 29, 1944

the native homes in Africa? These stone walled thatched roofed homes of the Italians are
almost as crude, but cleaner I hope. We have spent several nights sleeping in Italian grass huts
that formerly housed sheep, goats, cows, chickens and even human animals. Often we have to
put out the former city dwellers who have fled to the mountains as the war has reached their
villages and towns up to now untouched by the destruction of our army and air force. We have
to find a place to stay so we make them find another dwelling for the night. They usually can
find room in another crowded home the army has not taken over completely.

A couple of nights ago I had two soft boiled eggs, the first I had since coming over seas.
I boiled them myself in my canteen cup and gobbled them down sans salt or butter and they
still tasted wonderful. We also managed to spirit away two chickens from which I salvaged a
rather tough leg. Last evening the home we used as an aid station and which had been used
just a couple hours before as a German station, had two hams hanging from the rafters and
we put them to good use.

I'm afraid it is very obvious that our outfit has been in the fighting here in Italy in the recent
push. I've been trying to keep the glad tidings from you, but inasmuch as I haven't been able
to write regularly I'm sure you know now. Everything is O.K., however, so don't worry.

I never thought I would travel through Italy with a mule train, but transportation difficul-
ties are so severe here in the mountains that it is almost a necessity to use them. I'm becoming
almost proficient as a mule skinner, as least as good as the half baked Italians that pass them-
selves off as skinners. I think they have drafted all the morons left in the Italian army, given
them antiquated rifles and loaned them to the fifth army to care for their mules. They honestly
aren't much good for our men have to do most of the packing as well as guiding of the animals.
If some one doesn't tell them to move they will stay put even if the whole column ahead of
them moves leaving them standing along. I've even gotten to the point where I can give a
mule a boost in the rear and help lift him off the ground when he becomes obstinate.

Basically, an enormous number of the Italians are terribly low in what I would call self
respect. I've heard about the volatile Latin temperament but only recently have I seen it at
work. A great many (but be assured I don't mean all) think they should receive everything
but give nothing or practically nothing in return, they apparently have no restraint on venting
their emotions especially if they feel they are losing “face” in a situation, and a great many of
them are either very unintelligent or do not have sufficient education. Or perhaps I seen too
much of them. I can't see the forest because of the trees.

In these isolated mountain districts crossed only by rough mule trails (and a few apparently
very old well paved paths) we really found people still clinging to many of their old ways –
very colorful clothes and a strange mixing of old & new style garments – felt hats and leather
sandles fastened by wide straps would around the legs, bright colored dresses and modern fur
coats. One paunchy old woman dressed in purple and wearing a kerchief that kept sliding
down on her head, reminded me of the queen in Alice in Wonderland as her sagging jowls
kept her face in the state of a continuous frown. She was making yarn from the rough wool and walked about all day with her hands full spinning wool.

Ever since reading Heidi I have wondered about goats milk and at last I've had my chance to drink a cup or two. It really is quite good, similar to cows milk but a little sweeter. Goats cheese too is good and the Italian bread fair. Ever since I was small I've wanted to lie on a green Alpine mountain side, drink goats milk and munch brown bread and goats cheese. Well, I'm in the Appenines and not lying in the grass, and didn't have all of my meal at the same time, but I've made some progress toward my objective anyway. Maybe I'll make the Alps yet.

One of the greatest surprises of all was the finding of buffaloe high in the mountains.

When we were in some of the most isolated regions some of our supplies were dropped by plane and most was smashed, especially our medical supplies. Well, they tried anyway. They haven't yet learned of the invention of parachutes.

I'm out here now without any envelopes but I think I can manage to borrow at least one envelope.

At last I have received word from Martha concerning her engagement and will write when I can. Tell her I received her letter and send her my best wishes.

Please don't worry if you don't hear from me regularly, for I simply can't write and get my letters out while we are in the mountains. You'll begin to hear from me more regularly in the near future, however, if I can possibly manage it. Your letters are beginning to come up quite regularly now and that is a good sign.

Love,
Son

June, 1944
Letter 201, 1944-06-04 (back to Table of Contents)

Dear Mother & Dad,

During the past few days I have acquired for myself some sneaking little bug that has sent me to the hospital with a severe headache and fever. However, no one seems to be able to diagnose my case despite numerous finger prickings for blood tests and constant inhalations of pills to reduce my fever and placate my pounding head. This afternoon I'm really beginning to feel better, for I swathed my head with a water soaked towel and that seemed to do the trick, at least temporarily. I know it is nothing to be at all alarmed about. And the situation does have one excellent feature—kitchen cooked meals instead of C and K rations. I've only nibbled so far, but soon I hope to be eating my normal consumption again.

How is the camera situation coming along? Still trying, I hope. Also, do you think you can find me a pair of sun glasses and a sturdy case to hold them. I broke the pair I bought in Texas the other day (no, I didn't buy them the other day) for I was carrying them loose in my shirt pocket. Be sure they are large enough to fit me and don't merely cling my ears by chance.

Tell Martha, that despite my best intentions, it looks as if I won't be able to get to Naples

June 4, 1944
to do the purchasing I promised. If I can, I certainly shall. Otherwise I shall make up for it in
some other way. The same goes for the articles you wanted for Mildred and grandma.

I started to tell you about some of the sights we saw in the mountains but I can't remember
now what I mentioned. I know one of the most symbolic sounds, as we trudged up and down
those steep, trailless cliffs, was the mocking voice of a cuckoo, taunting us from the distance.
And the strange part of it is that I think his deductions are correct.

We all wondered where we would be able to get water, for as you near the tops of these
mountains the land becomes most barren. The natives, however, always assured us that there
was plenty of water ahead and despite our misgivings their predictions were correct. I still
can't figure what the source of the water was, but all throughout the mountains were huge
wells, between 10 and 15 feet in diameter filled with water, muddy it is true, but still water.
We filled our canteens and purified the water with plenty of halazone and camouflaged the
taste with lemon powder. The horses and mules drank it as nature provided and seemed to
suffer not in the least.

Well, I guess this is enough for today's travelogue. Mr. Crats hasn't reimbursed me for my
last one's yet, so he can't complain.

Love,
Son

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Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm still lounging about in the hospital, but am feeling fine so expect to be out in a day
or so. The rest has really done me wonders, and I feel almost new again. It must have been
providence that laid me up for a rest.

I would like some more batteries for my pencil flashlight and also a bulb or two. An 8 oz.
(pkg. will do fine for this.

I'd like to be some Harlem flat or a southern cabin after the war and hear the negroes
who have been near the fighting exaggerate about their experiences. They have a wonderful
facility for impromptu story telling with the added gifts of flexible voices, perceptive emotions
and ability of rendering their own sound effects, naturally plus their enviable sense of humor
and good spirits. We had a colored boy in our ward and the other night he entertained us
with tales of his experiences, accompanying his accounts with much thigh slapping and loud
rolls of laughter. I presume they were happenings that all present had probably seen, but none
had seen them before from his highly original viewpoint. Stories told by him and his friends
would make a great addition to stories of this war. If only I were an editor I could have a
whole series of post war books planned for publication.

The hospital had a movie last evening and I managed to inveigle a seat in the sweat-box
tent. It was well worth the choice, however, for the show as “The Human Comedy”, a fairly
good adaptation from the book. Perhaps you have already seen it.
The rumor just whizzed by saying that the invasion of France has begun. I do so hope it is true. All the fellows here have been waiting so long for it, that I certainly would hate to discover this to be only another false tale. Whether or not the war is to be over soon hinges on the outcome of this. May it be a success.

I wrote a short note to Martha the other day, offering her my best wishes. I couldn’t say all I would like, but I think she will understand. I certainly wish I could be home for the wedding, but I fear July will roll around too soon for that. I hope you will include me in her wedding present and in addition I hope to pick up some little trinket over here for her.

When I sent my next money order it should be for about $300. I won't recognize my bank account when I get back, will I? Put as much away as you can and perhaps I'll be able to work on my Masters shortly after I return.

At last I've seen some of the land that was once the Anzio beachhead. I certainly feel sorry for those poor fellows who spent so many days on this flat, desolate land, having also looked down on the same ground from the German held positions. Egad! What a life. I'd prefer fighting in the mountains any time.

Well, I guess the invasion is true. Maybe now I'll be home sooner than I expected. In the meanwhile, look after yourselves, and try not to worry about me.

Love,
Son

Letter 203, 1944-06-07 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 22

June 7, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

June 7th. June 9th. There is something about one of those dates that I should remember. What is it? Do you know? Perhaps it is someone’s birthday anniversary. If so, my congratulations and best wishes, and all that sort of thing. Seriously, I do wish I were home so we could have a party together again, when we can make up for this time we are spending apart now.

I had a wonderful hot shower this afternoon here on the beachhead where just a few days ago the shells were still racing in. Today you would scarcely know a war was on. Of course, the hospital is still here and occasionally great fleets of planes soar over – but now there is no artillery, no dive bombing, no rifle fire. Just the hot sun beating down on the dusty, flat land, blue, blue sky, rolling fleecy clouds – and barrage balloons near the distant horizon.

I know I haven’t asked for any packages from home in a good long time, so if I want anything during the next few months I had better ask now. I do wish they would let you do the selecting, but as that apparently isn’t to be, here goes – jam, (peanut butter, crackers, sardines, sandwich spreads, canned meats and chicken, candy (caramel squares), potato sticks, cocoa, canned tuna (how have I forgotten that before) – that should do for a while shouldn’t it?

I don’t need any more stamps, but I would like some writing paper of the type I’m using here. Mailed 7/6/44 Jam crackers sardines sandwich spread chicken tuna. Don’t send me any more stamps. I have plenty.

Love,
Son
I’m leaving the hospital tomorrow, so from now on you can expect fewer letters again for a while. For heaven’s sake don’t let it worry you.

The Italians grow wonderful cherries and I snagged a good quantity the other day. Come to think of it, maybe that is what put me in the hospital. I certainly ate enough to do the job.

There was a fair map of Rome in the Stars & Stripes yesterday which I snipped out to guide me in my hoped for sightseeing tour of the city. I understand no one is allowed to enter without a pass but that sightseeing tours will be arranged. I do hope so, for I hate to miss out on the opportunity of doing a bit of gawking while near by. I’m going to try to manage it.

Well, enough said for today. I’ll describe my forthcoming sightseeing trips in the future installments.

Love,
Son

Letter 204, 1944-06-09

Dear Mother & Dad,

I often wondered why Ulman’s grandmother should choose Rome, of all cities, to expatriate herself in. Now I think I know. Rome is one of the most beautiful cities I have ever seen – great wide streets, massive buildings, some very, very modern, numerous squares and monuments, scattered ruins, & the proud walls and banks of the Tiber give it even a more carefully cared for appearance than any city I’ve yet seen. But the girls! Egad, you should see them! Very, very attractive and beautifully dressed. You would never think that war had passed through here. And to think I got this one big eyeful in a passing glance. I’ll tell you more when I see more. And may it be soon.

It’s very evident that I’m out of the hospital and going strong again. Can’t keep me down. When I got back to the aid station I had stacks of mail waiting for me – from you folks, Miss Todd (who has had an eye operation recently), Jim Birtles, and a package of cocoa, cake and ink & envelopes (a most tasty combination). I can hardly wait until the camera arrives, but I know it won’t be here for quite some time yet. I’m really pleased that you were able to get one for me. Do you remember if the size of the film was 35mm?

Try as hard as I can, I can’t seem to write this evening. Too much talk going on about about. I’ll close soon and try again tomorrow.

We are going to be resting soon so you will be hearing from me more regularly then.

And so to bed

Love,
Son

June 9, 1944
June 11, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

We are still sitting about semi-comfortably in the same aid station we have been using for several days, waiting for a rest area to be selected for us. Tomorrow perhaps. Anyway, now we are miles and miles from the battle lines, which is the important fact to be considered right now.

The country about Rome is entirely different from any we have previously seen in Italy, rolling hills apparently very fertile, yellow grain fields, vegetable gardens, orchards, winding roads. The Germans have done very little damage to the highway, with the exception of blowing a few bridges. The roadside itself, however, is strewn with wrecked and burned German vehicles and the charred remains of horses and mules. Not a pleasant sight but an encouraging one. Also along the side of the road, marked by tufts of straw on the top of a long stick, are many protective dugouts and slit trenches the Jerries had prepared in case of aerial attack. Now those days are gone forever in this section of Italy, perhaps soon for Italy as a whole.

I did quite a bit of riding about the country side this afternoon, trying to check on some information we needed. I had to laugh as I thought of what I was doing and then you probably imagined I was doing. Three of us were squeezed into the front seat of “Carolyn” and I was taking a beating from the flying mud. It had rained hard all morning and the side road we were using was a watery skating rink. My helmet declined to stay on my head, so I finally withdrew from the field and carried it in my lap. On the next road we used the dust was so thick I could barely keep my eyes open. A strange country this, a country of contrasts, even to the types of architecture, - the very old and the very modern.

I went to church this evening at the service held in a small church no longer used by the villagers. Though deserted, it still had candles on the alter and oil paintings on the wall. It wasn’t particularly old but the style was tinged with Byzantine – dome and cupolas – How that got this far south is hard to say.

We are celebrating Lt. Singmaster’s fourth wedding anniversary this evening – gafflebiter—sardines – crackers – cocoa. I’m not indulging heartily, for I’m having one of my recurrent stomach upsets, but I can still nibble and then belch and burp with great gusto. I’ll be OK, tomorrow.

More to write, but I can’t concentrate now. More later.

Love,

Son

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Herring tidbits in wine, sherry or dill sauce.
June 14, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Just as I began to write two packages arrived and a letter of May 18th. One of the packages was from Mildred and the other contained the tuna, sandwich spread, etc. I’ve tried the gum drops already. The rest comes later. I ate my first meal in a couple of days this evening and I don’t want to tax my stomach. It won’t be long before I’ll be gorging again, however.

I’m including a clipping that I had planned to send several weeks ago, but at the time censorship prevented it from going through. Now our lines are far from this sector so we can speak more freely of it now. I have some postcards of the same town that I will send when I can locate them again. They are hidden somewhere in the mess in the trailer.

At last we’ve seen our barracks bags after several weeks. Practically everything has been taken from them with the exception of our personal items. A good many of the fellows even had those articles missing, but I was more fortunate. Even my neckties and moccasins are still there. I’ll never forgive the army for making me pack two enormous bags overseas, practically breaking my back on every move, and now leaving me so little that I can toss it around in my hands. They simply used us as stevedores for carrying equipment overseas.

We are located fairly near Rome, and I hope to go sightseeing there in a few days. There is so much to see and I have so little knowledge of where to go that I fear I’ll miss some of the important sights. You know me. All eyes. I have picked up an Italian art book, that has some excellent illustrations. I guess that will serve as my guide along with a small map of Rome I cut from the Stars & Stripes. I’ll make out all right. I’ve seen St. Peters and Vatican City from the distance as well as a few other famous historical spots. Not bad for a passing glance.

I had a wonderful swim this afternoon in a small crater lake. From the looks of the land formations about, I’m almost positive that the lake has been formed in the crater of a long extinct volcano. From the rim of the cliff that rings the depression you can take in the view of the entire lake in one glance. From above, looking down, the water is a beautiful, shining blue, but when you reach the shore you discover the swimmers have muddied it up a bit. That doesn’t spoil the water, however, for the swimming is excellent. At least it was until a mob of Goums (French North African native troops) moved in on us and began to scrub their clothes along the shore. A real novelty this was, too, for they scrubbed their clothes with their feet rather than hands, dancing about like jitterbug artists. I think some of the Goums themselves realized the humor of the situation, for one of them began to howl out in their high, shrill voices one of their native tunes in rhythm to the washers gyrations. They really got the clothes clean too – with the help of G.I. soap.

I saw Donald Robinson a few minutes the other evening and expect to look him up soon again. I wouldn’t have known him if he hadn’t introduced himself, and I fear I might not recognize him again, for it was dusk when I was talking to him. He asked about all of you, especially Aunt Onie. Tell her I saw him, won’t you.

Jim flunked out – or ‘washed out’ as he called it – just a month before he was due for his wings. I’ll send you his letter about it if I can find it. He probably hasn’t told Phebe much about it, so just keep it quiet until she tells you the whole story. Let him tell her what he wants to.

If you should happen to like Italian vacations, I guess this is a sort of Italian vacation.
Whoever built this house truly picked one of the best sites for a porch for it offers an expansive view from the low hill we are on across the coastal plain. We can see for miles — miles of flat, uninteresting land.

Lt. Singmaster told me to tell you that he is playing the organ “beautifully” — (to quote him). It’s obvious by this that the chaplain has his organ again.

Way off in the distance we could see the red tracer bullets of anti-aircraft fire, attempting to hit Tedeschi planes flying over. I heard no bombs fall so apparently their mission was unsuccessful. I hope so anyway. Seldom do their planes come near us, for they have greater use for them on other fronts. They have almost their hands full now.

Love,
Son

\[a\] The Moroccan Goumiers were indigenous soldiers who served in auxiliary units attached to the French Army of Africa, between 1908 and 1956. While nominally in the service of the Sultan of Morocco, they served under French officers.

clipping from Stars & Stripes (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 22

[A clipping from Stars & Stripes: a well-written column “Yank about Italy” by G.D.—a description of Minturno]

Letter 207, 1944-06-17 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 22

June 17, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I’m glad to hear that at last you have received some mail written since the “push” began. I began to worry for fear you were worrying — if you know what I mean. I hope my cable gram didn’t frighten you too much either, but I wanted to send one while I could to assure you that I am O.K.

Today Donald Robinson dropped in again at the aid station and brought his brother, Ed, with him. Of course I didn’t recognize his brother, but I guessed who it must be, so everything turned out all right. You know how little we ever saw of Ralph’s family. Ed is in a 5th Army anti-aircraft outfit and managed to get a day pass to this section. I believe the two boys said they hadn’t seen each other in four years.

I had a wonderful time yesterday seeing the sights in Rome, or I should say, beginning to see the sights of Rome. A good many of the fellows seem to be disappointed in Rome because it doesn’t offer a lot or stage shows, ice cream shops and restaurants, but those who really want to see the famous places that are packed throughout this region can’t get to town often enough. Maybe I was a little overenthusiastic when I first wrote how beautiful the city is, for the first dazzling impression has gone, but it still is a most interesting place, quite attractive, especially along the Tiber. I know I’ll go in again and again, as often as I can.

I have another good word for the Red Cross. Yesterday they provided us with a guide to show us some of the sights, and therefore got us to some of the outskirts that otherwise we
I think that the most interesting spot I visited yesterday were the catacombs under the church of St. Sebastian. Ever since I read stories about the early Christians hiding in their underground cemeteries, I've wanted to prowl around in them, so when the guide said he was taking us there, I bet I was the most pleased rider on the truck. The entrance to those particular catacombs is down a stone stairway, within the church itself, for the builders of the church apparently considered the spot to be most sacred and erected the building directly over the tunnels. The padre led the way with a burning taper that was wound around a stick about two feet long [drawing by TW]. Whenever he needed more candle he simply unwound more of the candle from the stick. Each of us carried a small candle to light his own individual way. The tunnels are hewn out of solid rock and several of the tombs, placed in niches along the walls, have never been opened. Most, however, are only gaping holes. A few skeletons remain in a couple of open tombs, and a few scattered bits of sculpture can be seen. There are even small family chapels deep in the ground. Naturally we followed only a few of the streets, but we could see many branchings reaching off into the dark. These particular catacombs are on four levels, reached by gradually descending paths. Of course I wanted to explore further, but I feared I would get lost in the maze.

I'm not going to recite a guide book of all the places I visited, for it will be much more simple for me to send you the guide books when I finish with them. I also borrowed Ch. Newman's camera and took a few pictures along the way to supplement the post cards I bought. It's interesting to note that many of the folders have the descriptions written in both German & Italian. The Italians cater to any trade that comes along. Right now they are assiduously studying English.

I climbed as high as possible in the colloseum, and never regretted a step I took, for only at the top can you get a picture of how large the building is. When I first went in and stood near the arena I was most disappointed, for it seemed so small. I returned later and then began to realize what an immense building it is. I almost became dizzy looking down to the ground.

We also visited some of the churches, but we still have a good many more to see. St. Peters of course is the most famous and largest. I was surprised to discover that all the wall designs are mosaics and not paintings as I had previously presumed. I really didn't stay long enough to see all that I planned, and I hope to return again for another visit. Naturally I scouted around till I located the Pantheon and then too visited Santa Mara Maggiore, or one of the most famous and beautiful of all the basiliicas. Of course, all along the way we gawked and gaped at columns and ruins and tried to guess what they were or imagine how they looked before their marble casings had been removed. Now that I have oriented myself, the next visit will probably be even more interesting.

The city is thronged with soldiers, American, French, British, native troops. Italian, tramping the pavement trying to see as much as possible. Rome probably never has had such a busy tourist season in its many, many years of tourists seasons. And the vehicular transportation if something – really something!

The Red Cross has set up and I munched crullers and cookies at the snack bar yesterday evening. I even sneaked into line a second time because I was so hungry. Vendors on the street corners were selling some strange concoction of colored water and shavings of ice scraped off a dripping block of ice melting in the hot sun on the table top. Everyone crowded around and drank because it was wet, not because it was good. I also sampled some ice cream, apparently
made without cream or milk. And then survived the C Rations we carried with us.

Love,
Son

Letter 208, 1944-06-20 (back to Table of Contents)

June 20, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Your letters of June 12th came this evening and I was pleased to learn that at long last you are beginning to receive my mail. Now I wish your package containing the camera would put in its appearance here. I now have four films but could always use more—when I begin to make up for lost time when the snap factory arrives.

Yes, I’ve been to Rome again I’m most happy to report. For some strange reason it has been difficult for us to get the fellows to accept passes unless each could pick the group he wanted to go with. Most were going simply for a gay time, so you can’t blame them for wanting congenial friends; but since my good time consisted mostly of sightseeing, I asked to go again even if it should be alone. Naturally I connected up with several fellows I know well in other companies and had a swell time anyway. I went on another tour with a different guide, a real guide this time, not just another Italian who can stumble along in the English language. This woman, for strange enough our guide was a woman, had been doing this type of work for 14 years, is an instructor of the history of art at the University of Rome. She was really wonderful. She had an excellent understanding of the philosophy of history and did her best to pass on some of this understanding to her audience. She was really doing a bit of teaching, some of the very best of teaching, and her listeners seemed to honestly appreciate her efforts. I know that one of the reasons she acted as a guide was because of the pedagogic satisfaction it gave her. She admitted as much when I was talking to her after the trip, would that there were more teachers like her.

Yesterday we visited the Church of St. John of Laterna in the region of the old residences of the popes. It is in fine condition, having been repaired & restored through the centuries. The oldest remains are the baptistery, used when the Catholic church still practiced immersion. The floor is partially dug away to reveal even more ancient foundations. Dante wrote about this in his Comedy, referring specifically to the “musical” doors leading into a side chapel, as well as the beauty of the place. We even saw the cloister walk of the monastery, decorated with carefully fashioned bits of sculpture. It was here that our guide gave one of her best impromptu dissertations on history, indicating the necessity of understanding the people of the period as well as noting the events – people are much the same now as then, it is true, but the life of quiet, of contemplation, of introspection, of unique products of art rather than mass production, make them different as well as similar, etc. Well, done, especially in an atmosphere so similar to that which she was explaining. We seemed shut out from the world as a whole, cut off in a little world of our own.

Next came the colloseum, and once again her talk was the best part of the stop – her explanation of the conflict between the enforcement of Roman law (for the Christians were
executed because of high treason and not because they were Christians) and the [Time out for a ripe fig. They are in season here in Italy now] strict obeying of the Christian ideals – the punishment of citizens and non-citizens – the decision of what is actually right & actually wrong, for both were correct from their point of view, & descriptions of the colloseum & its travestone covering – the purposes for which the contests were used – the gladiators compared to modern sport heroes, etc. This is going to deteriorate into an essay on history if I don't look out, but you see, my interest in history has lifted from its temporary slump.

To the catacombs next, where we visited more tunnels in the St. Sebastian tombs. Did you know that these underground cemeteries were necessary because the Romans cremated their dead and the Christians wished to bury the body as a whole? I always imagined that the entrances were hidden in bushes, etc. but the entry to this particular one was beneath the home of an early Christian family. I suppose the others were similarly concealed. I'm including a small medal I bought as a souvenier of my visit here.

Next on the itinerary – St. Peters, to which we returned later for a longer visit. The four of us climbed to the very top of the cathedral, the last thirty feet or so of which is up, straight up, a small iron ladder through a tube so small that one can barely draw up his leg to reach the next step. Finally, we reached the small steel ball at the top, peered out through the narrow slit, and squeezed down again. The view from the dome offers a fine view of Vatican City as a whole. Oh yes, I got you a couple of coins from Vatican City. You see the other day I left Italy twice and went to a neutral state. I was thinking of taking rations with me and claiming sanctuary and defying the army to enter a neutral state to haul me back. Not a bad idea at that.

We walked until I could walk no longer, seeing and looking and gawking, resting, and then walking again. Ruins and whole buildings, ancient, narrow streets and wide thoroughfares. Maybe I'll get in again. I do hope so.

I bought a few souveniers but haven't been very successful in my search – just a few post cards, a decorated box and small plate and two small cameos (no large ones yet). I'll get it off to you shortly, but I fear it will be disappointing.

Here's another request for edibles – that powdered fruit flavoring is OK so send me more of it also caramels, crackers, sandwich spreads, tuna fish, sardines, meat spreads, chicken, etc. You know what I enjoy. Also some paper similar to this that I am using.

I'm planning to catch up with my correspondence in a day or two – Jim, Don T., Miss Todd, Martha, etc. My plans are good. Now all I have to do is to execute the plans.

Love,
Son

[in a hand not TW's: crackers, sandwich spreads, tuna fish, chicken mailed 8/10/44: note the disparity in dates. TW writes on June 20th; the response is almost two months later.]
I've been doing so much and seeing so much the last few days that I honestly haven't had
time to write. I had a three day pass to Rome, plus two days for travelling to and from the
city, and naturally I had a wonderful time. In fact, I had about the very best and enjoyable
days since I came into the army. The Fifth Army has established a rest camp on the outskirts
of Rome in an area that Mussolini was preparing for holding the Olympic games. Most of the
construction was completed, except for the very largest stadium, and very well built it was,
too. Once we had drawn our blankets and found a place to sleep, we were left to our own
devices, free to come and go as we pleased. The clerks from the other battalions were there
also, and the three of us hanged about together, walking 'til we could scarcely walk another
step. We ate a few meals at the rest camp, slept there nights, snacked at the Red Cross, saw a
show or two and spent the rest of the time sightseeing.

There is so much to tell that I scarcely know where to begin. I'll write a little and tell you
more later.

I spent a good many hours shopping, vainly attempting to find some worthwhile souve-
niers of Rome. The fact that the stores close about 1230 and remain closed until about 4 (if
they open at all the rest of the day) – for lunch – doesn't facilitate shopping at all. However,
persevering in my valorous efforts, I finally found them open long enough to get a few remem-
brances for you. They are already on their way and should be arriving any month now. At the
Piazza de Spagna, the modern Rome shopping center, I found a nice antique shop at which
I bought a few cameos. They probably aren't bargains, but I did think they were better than
none at all, so I splurged and bought. Several packages are on the way so you may wish to
get them all together before distributing them. I'm leaving the selection to you, giving you
the first choice. I'll describe them and give you a little help. In the cigar box you will find 4
large cameos along with several small ones. The large head on the almost pure white shell is
supposed to be a couple of hundred years old (believe it or not) and I selected that for you. It
is very finely carved and when cleaned slightly I think it will prove to be the nicest of the lot.
The figure playing the lute I thought might be appropriate for Martha, and the decision about
the other two for grandma & Mildred is up to you—or them. You may prefer one of them
yourself. They really aren't the best, but Rome isn't the cameo city that Naples is. These are
just the tag ends, but I did my best. Some of the smaller pins are very nicely carved, especially
the head of Minerva. If you care to, pick as many as you wish and have them mounted. Put
the rest away and call them an investment. The cameo with the Pope's head would make a
unique man's ring and I picked that for dad. If mountings are too expensive now, pack them
all away and pull them out when you display to the incredulous gaze of your visitors the awe
inspiring relics sent to you from lands across the sea.

A small package (first class) which should reach you in a few days, contains two small
jewelry boxes, presumably of leather. The larger one is for you, the smaller for you if you
wish, or you might give it to Barbara. If you prefer this box to the designed plate (small), and
I think you might like the box better, give the plate to Barbara. Or keep them yourself.

With the cameos you will find a medal I received from the Pope at the Vatican at one of
the audiences he holds every day. With thousands of others I crowded into the Vatican and
stood for an hour waiting for the Pope to appear and say a few words in English. The devout
Catholics were very visibly impressed but I must confess that I was not at all affected. I'm glad
I went, however, for it gave me an opportunity to make some very interesting observations.

Fred Roth, one of the medics I was with, had his 35 mm camera with him, but no black
and white film, so I used another of my films in his camera. Kenny Goodman, the chaplain's assistant, is planning to develop and print our films as soon as his tank arrives, so perhaps shortly I will have some snap shots to send home. I did have one shot taken while at the rest camp but haven't received them yet. As soon as they reach me, I'll send a print to you.

Oh, yes, I had some ice cream in town, real American ice cream, made by the Red Cross and served at their center in a large park in the city. Also some cokes at the rest camp.

The U.S. army has made one very fine move in Rome by opening restaurants for the men in town on pass. With the thousands that swarm in every day it really is a necessity. The government furnishes the food, has taken over some of the most famed restaurants in town (waiters and all) and the soldiers pay 10¢ per meal to pay for the services of the waiters. The meals are good, better than the usual G.I. cooking, but the atmosphere is the thing. You can't imagine how relaxing it is to once again to into a restaurant, be shown to your seat, and have waiters, excellent waiters, serve your meal with real Italian flourish. The coffee is served in wine bottles, the fruit desserts are ladled from silver dishes onto your plates, water appears on the table almost as quickly as you ask for it, candles burn on the tables in the inner rooms (rationed electricity prohibits lighting the chandeliers). It makes you feel almost like a civilian again. And the waiters treat you as guests, not as transient soldiers. They even bid you bon giorno as you leave. You can forget you are in the army for a few minutes.

You wouldn't feel you had visited Rome if you hadn't ridden about in the horse drawn carriages that take the place of our taxis at home. Getting a carriage is like getting an unoccupied taxi about theater time in New York. We managed to sneak into one, however, and rode about like kings, slowly being drawn along the crowded thoroughfares. I have a shot of us and I hope it will come out. The driver strutted like a peacock as the shutter clicked.

Tell Martha and the others that their cameos are on the way. If they like some of the others I'll try to buy similar ones for them if they wish but don't give them the ones I bought for you. Theirs are fancy but also quite old, not at all like the modern carvings.

A package was here when I returned today, one containing crackers, cheese, canned goods and writing paper. The camera still hasn't come.

I sent home about $180 the other day and you should be receiving a check before too long. Let me know when you receive it. We are to be paid again tomorrow so soon some more money will be on its way.

I think your choice of silver candle sticks for Martha and Mort will be excellent. You always have good taste in such matters.

You asked about how I returned from the hospital. I believe the system has changed since, but then, on release from the hospital, trucks carried us to a “casual center” where all men released from nearby hospitals assembled. All men from the same division were put into trucks & transported to their particular outfit, changing from truck to truck until the individual gets to where he belongs.

Love,
Son

July, 1944
Letter 210, 1944-07-02 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 23

July 2, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I have sent home another money order for $60 that should arrive before too long. I also bought a $25 war bond that should reach you in a week or so. (Sorry that the pen is writing so poorly)

Yes, I have finally received my combat shoes – yesterday. In the meantime I had picked up a pair of shoes I could wear with leggings that were very satisfactory but not as easy to put on. Don’t worry about those troublesome nails. They have not bothered me in the least.

The chaplain is going on pass today near Naples and is going to try to buy a really nice cameo for me. I hope he can manage it for all that I have sent so far have been only mediocre.

Barbara sent me the enclosed clipping that Ruth had sent to her. I wrote a short note to Bill this evening at his church in Middletown. Do you think it possible that Uncle Clint could be a member of his congregation.

Believe it or not we had ice cream today for dessert, and really good cream it was too.. Not this Italian frozen stuff but a fair, creamy American concoction.

Yes, our regiment was in Santa Maria but fortunately not when the terrific fighting was going on. I know it is hard for you to follow troop movements of particular outfits for the newspapers do not announce definite names until long after the action has been completed. Most of our work was in the mountains and I would prefer to do mountain fighting any day to this flat country stuff. The mountains afford you a great deal of natural protection over which it is difficult to fire artillery. It was in the valleys [sic] that we had our greatest troubles, and they weren’t too bad, but watch the news items for notices about the 88th division or the 349th, 350th, or 351st Infantry regiments. You may be able to pick up some hints there.

Not much news tonight.

I have written myself out trying to catch up with the letters I owe.

Love,
Son

Letter 211, 1944-07-02 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 23

2 July 44
G.O. No. 13 Hqs. 350th Infantry Award of the CIB
T/3 Truman A. Warner 31250784
5 July This is our worst day of battle our casualties are high 50% in K Co

Letter 212, 1944-07-07 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 23
Dear Mother & Dad,

The weather has now turned terribly hot, not at all the kind of weather I enjoy. I was hoping that here in Italy we could get away from that Louisiana type of life, but I guess it has caught up to me again.

Ah, chocolate candy. One of the fellows has hauled out some half melted chocolates which he has been secreting in his gas mask case. Runny. But good.

My camera still hasn't arrived. However, I have heard that there are many packages and much first class mail at the A.P.O. so maybe in a day or so I'll be seeing it. I'm missing the chance for a good many fine shots, but it is encouraging to know that it is on the way.

Jim B. sent me a copy of Kenneth Roberts' “Arundel.” He asked me to request that he send it and it has been on the way since he was in California. He also is planning to ship a small copy of some of Gilbert & Sullivan.

I've been all afternoon attempting to write this letter, but we've been so busy sending the sick off to the hospital that I haven't had much time. The other trouble is that I can't think of much to write. My imagination has begun to desert me. Egad, what a life.

I guess it is an impossible task to really write a letter today. Anyway, you'll know I'm still O.K.

Love,
Son

Letter 213, 1944-07-12 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 23

Dear Mother & Dad,

It has been quite some time since I last wrote, but I haven't been free to do as much as I like. I'm still going strong, though, so you needn't worry. Where we are now we are receiving mail only spasmodically and no packages, so I haven't received my camera yet. I hope to be getting it shortly, however.

I suppose you are imagining that we are again on the front, and just to relieve your mind I'll tell you that we are. I hope that by the time this reaches you, we will be off again. I probably could give you a vivid description of what it is like here, but you could never really understand what it is like until you experience it yourself. We in the aid station are fairly fortunate, but I do feel sorry for the fellows in the line companies. They really take a terrible beating.

The news from the Italian front during the past few days undoubtedly has shown very slow progress. And slow it has been. The terrain here is miserable for fighting – well built farmhouses on top of the knolls, the Jerrys have excellent observation from the surrounding hills & can see every move you make. Apparently they can also look through the hills too, for they can see what you are doing when you think you are well concealed.

Some of the fellows killed some young chickens yesterday and we boiled them in German
canteen cups, flavoring the broth with boullion from our K rations. I had a taste of leg and breast, but only a taste.

The last few days I have felt like Florence Nightingale, wandering amongst the wounded with a lamp in my hand. The architecture of the farm houses in this section is entirely different from that of the other sections of Italy we have seen so far—the lower portion being the barn and the second floor the living quarters. The farmers here each apparently owns a good acreage of land and is fairly prosperous and consequently left behind great numbers and kinds of animals as they fled from the war. Our aid stations have been often located in the stable section. The other night I was called to look after some wounded in a house high on a hill top, right on the very front lines. It was almost a Civil War scene that I stepped into. The hay covered floor was littered with wounded, so tightly packed that it was difficult to step around the patients. Of course, the scars of the day's battle were evidenced by gaping holes in the walls & missing roofs, which made the use of lights almost impossible. And naturally we needed light to look after the wounded. For hours that night we stumbled around in almost absolute darkness, aided only [by] faint glimmers of light from our shielded flashlights. If we accidentally revealed a ray of any intensity, the howls of protests from the others forced us to immediately shut it off. Caring for these men was really an all night job. I believe I slept a half an hour and then was awakened by the German prisoners who were to litter haul the men down the hill. You never get a true picture of war from books and magazines, for they don't mention things such as took place that evening. We had to kneel between patients to give plasma; when looking after a patient that had been undisturbed for a time we often had to brush away young chicks that were roosting on the fellows backs or stomachs; occasionally a cat would stroll through; a patrol of ducks, large and small, would parade amongst the wounded; we would stumble over outstretched hands and arms; the reek of ammonia from the refuse of the cows assaulted our noses; we made pillows from straw and litters from poles & shelter halves; we hauled water from the well in the rear of the building; we contacted the aid station by radio spasmodically for plasma and litters; men from the company whose C.P. we were using went in and out with rifles and machine guns; battalion runners came and went; the acting first sergeant made his morning report swathed in a shelter half to shut off the light; rations were carted in from the D.P.; a German wounded kept asking for water; an occasional prisoner was brought in; two of our medics captured a Jerry and led him in; we could hear tanks moving in the near distance; both the well and the ill snored lustily or emitted an occasional groan. By the time dawn broke we had evacuated part of our patients. The next day's battle was ready to begin. A machine gun spoke from upstairs. The war had begun anew. And it wasn't pleasant.

Strange as it may seem, some of the Italian farm families refuse to leave their homes when the fighting reaches them. A few days ago we had a temporary station on the first floor of a farm house, while the owners still lived upstairs. They even helped by bringing warm milk for the wounded. For those of us who were busy working, they cooked chicken, gave us bread, cucumbers, warm milk & wine. We ate at their large family table, - off plates with regular knives & forks, as the women hustled about heating milk over hot coals and plucking feathers from the chickens and pigeons they were preparing to cook. The war so far had not affected the famers much for they are so much more self-sufficient than the city dwellers. The battle was just a passing spectacle for the few that remained behind to see.

Sitting in our thick walled aid station last evening, it impressed me what a strange little
group we medics are. Outside we could hear the screaming shells, the bursting bombs, the sputter of machine guns and rifle in the distance – representing thousands of men bent on killing – on the taking of life – on wounding, while here in the station was a small group, lined about the wall, talking by candle light, waiting for patients – A small group trying to counteract all the horrors the others were committing. As long as I am in this, I’m glad that I am one of the small group that is doing constructive work as far as it can be considered such. I’d be almost ashamed to be a member of the other larger group when I could be doing what I am doing now. I truly am glad everything worked out as it did.

I fear I’ve written a great deal and said little. I’ll try not to turn philosopher again for a time.

Love,
Son

P.S. Please note. It is now Captain Singmaster. I almost forgot again. His bucking got him there you see. Only occasional bribes necessary.

19 July 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Here are some of the negatives of some of the pictures I took on the chaplain’s camera in Rome. I have another film yet to be developed that I’ll get off to you as soon as I can. Get some enlargements made of these, send me copies if you wish, but be sure to send me prints (several) of the group pictures, for I know the boys in them will want copies.

We’ve been eating well today. Soup made from boullion and fresh vegetables from the gardens nearby. Corn on the cob tonight – also duck. I had an onion and cheese sandwich this noon. Really eating well – right off the land.

Remember the play “You Can’t Take it With You”? Our aid station tonight is like a scene from that – corn cooking on the stove in the fireplace, Kenny developing films in the next room and dashing into this to look at his products, A wounded Italian mule skinner talking to a tank officer who dropped in, another “Eye-tie” sleeping on an excellent mattress on the floor, the aid station sitting about on the floor, some drinking vino from a native bottle, little groups of conversationalists, men from nearby companies looking in for a minute, one jeep driver sleeping under the table, all of us sweating because of the lack of air due to black out conditions. What a life. What a life.

Love,
Son

Letter 215, 1944-07-19 (back to Table of Contents)
19 July 44

Dear Mother & Dad,

Another note. I also have sent pictures today to grandma and Martha. The other two I am sending to you to do with as you wish. I don’t have Mildred’s new address, but she might like one. You do the distributing.

The chaplain was in Naples a week or so ago and bought a nice cameo for me. It is much nicer than any I have sent so far, and I will get it off whenever I can. I have not seen it myself, yet, but from the description I know it will be most satisfactory. It is modern – not like the old ones I have sent previously.

We have been receiving no packages whatsoever, so when we get to a point where they can reach us I should have a whole pile. I hope so, for I certainly could stand a change of diet, and I would like my camera.

At least the news from the Russian front is good, despite the slowness of the progress in Italy and France. Well, maybe the Germans will give up before too long and let us all go home. This is a heck of a life for a civilized human being.

Love,

Son

Letter 216, 1944-07-19 (back to Table of Contents)

July 19, 44

Dear Mother & Dad,

Well, what do you think of it? The picture I mean. I’ve been waiting for the photos to be mailed to me and they finally reached me yesterday. The picture was taken at the base of the Mussolini monument at the Mussolini forum near Rome. And don’t worry. I’m not as thin as the snap might lead you to imply. I had just had a change of clothing and most apparently the shirt was too large. I’m still holding my own in weight.

Captain Stratman has left us to become Regimental Surgeon and now Capt. Singmaster is our Battalion Surgeon. No other officer has been assigned to us yet, but we understand a Medical Administrative officer is to be the assistant Battalion Surgeon. Remember when I was hoping to go to O.C.S.? I’m not in the least bit disappointed now; that I was wasn’t accepted, though I must confess that at the time I was rather discouraged. Now I’m not interested in rank or anything else military. I’m just interested in returning home.

At last I know how a person can reach the point where he can drink himself stupid without any qualms of conscience. No, I haven’t done it yet, but I’ve been tempted to. After going for hours without sleep, and seeing what you wish you weren’t seeing, you want to really escape from it all. And that certainly is why so many, even in civilian life, like the stuff so well. It’s a wonderful dope to help you escape for a few hours, but the trouble I that in the long run it doesn’t help a bit. In fact it makes it even more difficult for you to meet the situation normally and adjust to it with the best of your abilities. I guess I’ll hold off a bit longer.
I suppose I should not have written to you, telling you about the work we are doing up here on the front, for now I fear you will worry yourself sick. I could have been writing about our life up here all along, but I preferred not to worry you. Often times it sounds much worse than it really is, for a person can’t be as accurate as he would like in his choice of words.

Don’t worry, Dad, your letters are really very clear. I don’t have one bit of trouble reading the V-Mail.

The pictures I took on the chaplain’s film in Rome have been developed and came out very well. As soon as Kenny has a chance to make some prints for the others, I’ll send the negatives home to have you make enlarged prints. The films I sent to the signal corps three months ago to have developed have never yet been developed and returned. Neither have any of the others that were sent at the same time. Maybe someone else has them in his picture album by now.

This certainly is a battle weary land. Even the chickens limp and the cattle have wounds all over their bodies. These Italian farmers hang on until the last moment, until it is impossible to leave with their cattle, and so they just turn them loose to roam the fields where they too become battle casualties. At times, the families themselves do not leave their homes but prefer to run the risks rather than leave their possessions. Those that do leave, often go just a few hundred yards down the mountain side and hide in small caves, taking as many of their possessions as they possibly can. As soon as the small arms fire ceases, they begin to infiltrate back and settle down again, despite the occasional artillery shelling. Home still means much to many people, despite the warnings of the sociologists to the contrary. A house we are using as an aid station some morning may suddenly be awakened by a barefooted, kerciefed Italian peasant woman, pattering around the house, stepping over sleeping bodies, gathering up plates, buckets, clothes – anything but what she can use with practicality in a small cave – and dashing off again with an additional load also including huge round loaves of bread and a duck or two she hopes to save from the hungry boys sick of living on K rations.

I never believed I would eat the way I do now. We sample anything that offers a change from C-rations. Small chickens don’t stand a chance, especially if the house has a fire place and the owners have left a frying pan and little olive oil. The cheese we get in our rations tastes wonderful with the Italian natives’ bread. Pigeons are good also. The other day some fellows managed a small bit of beef which we cooked in small pieces on a stick over an open fire. Onions are good, when you can find them. I managed to locate a few ripe figs the other day by climbing a tree and searching amongst the green ones that covered the branches. Lately we have been eating the fairly ripe portions from the partially ripened plums. The tomatoes are ripening now. I had one today.

I received an invitation to Martha’s wedding the other day, on the 16th I believe. Tell Martha I was thinking of her on her wedding day, but I also spent one of my most miserable days in the army. It shouldn’t happen to a dog.

Enough for today. I’ll write again as soon as I can.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

I've really been on a letter writing spree the last couple of days. Don't be discouraged if it drops off sharply again, for I fear that will be the case.

I'm sending two envelopes of negatives today, of pictures I took in Rome on Roth's camera. They came out very well and I am most pleased with the results. I included one negative that is extremely faint and which has the roller markings along the edge crisscrossed over it. I do want that one printed, too, for it is a photo taken of the Pope during the audience I had at the Vatican. There is enough there so at least a little will show. Of course you will want prints enlarged. Those of others besides myself, have enough copies made so each can have one. The boys probably will want to pay for them so give me the prices. I imagine they will want copies of some of the other views also. If they don't weigh too much you may be able to send them in 8 ounce packages. The pictures that I took in March have never yet been returned, but I'm still hoping.

Another package is off on its way to you. I'm attempting to send it 1st class and I hope it gets through that way, for then perhaps it will arrived before Christmas. It's a cameo again and a really nice one this time. The chaplain bought it for me in Naples when he was there on pass. I had a great time deciding which one of the two he had to select. Both were very nice, but the one I finally selected was the smaller and yet the nicer, I believe. The carving fit the shell more artistically and the design was more simple and thus, to my way of thinking, more to your liking. Capt. Singmaster was sitting with outstretched claws waiting to take the one I left. I'm not sure he was pleased with my choice, but I hope he wasn't too disappointed. If you wish to see all the details, hold the cameo over a flashlight, right in the glass, and you can then see how carefully it has been carved. I also included a small bit of coral carving the chaplain bought in the Isle of Capri. Get the cameo appraised and see how much the jewelers think it is worth.

Today we have been having a snack of crackers and honey one of the boys sneaked from the hive. Very good it is, too. We have really been feasting during the past few days.

Did I ever tell you about the K-Rations we are issued and on which we have lived for weeks? The old ones were fair, but the new type we have been getting recently are even better. Maybe it strikes me so only because of the change. Breakfast: crackers, fruit bar, powdered coffee, sugar, ham and eggs (canned) Lunch: crackers, cheese, (sometimes with a bit of ham or bacon sprinkled throughout), lemon or orange powder, sugar, caramel candies Supper Pork loaf (or some similar terrible concoction), bouillon powder, crackers, chocolate bar. It doesn't sound bad at first, but a steady diet becomes monotonous. Perhaps now you can see why we are so anxious to eat what we can find on the farms and in the gardens, and why I usually write about our unexpected changes of diet. You undoubtedly can also see another reason why I am so anxious to get home and enjoy some of your good cooking. Oh, yes, another package would be enjoyable – fruit juice (powder) lump sugar, canned chicken, tuna fish, sardines, tongue,
crackers. You know what I enjoy.

Love,
Son

Letter 218, 1944-07-23 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 23

23 July 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Yesterday was package day and at long last my camera arrived. It is just the thing, and even those who know a great deal about cameras say you made an excellent choice. I loaded the camera last evening and will begin shooting today. Several other packages arrived also, and so in case I forget to mention them again or thank the donors, I'll tell you now. The sunglasses came, also batteries & bulbs, the book from Mrs. Morris, the candy from Frank, and fruit cake from Barbara. Thank them for me, please, and I'll try to write to them personally later.

Tomatoes are ripe now and so we vary our meals with them whenever we can. I just finished a cheese and tomato sandwich for lunch. The people who fled from the house we are now in, left a good quantity of the love apples [tomatoes] in the sun to ripen, and we are taking advantage of their thoughtfulness. I also had a peach today, the first since arriving here.

I presume you have Jim's new address. However, just in case, I'll send it along
Section G Davis-Monthan Field
Tucson, Arizona

I certainly am glad that this fighting isn't taking place back in the states. I'd hate to think of the army walking in on our homes and taking over. I never thought I could condone taking someone's home from him, but now we think nothing of it. Of course, we always try to find an empty building first, but if that is impossible, we move in with a family and have them crowd together in another part of the house or another building. Some try to raise a fuss, but when we indicate that we don't want to be there either, and wouldn't be if it weren't for them, they calm down. They just don't like the idea of leaving again, now that the Germans have left so they could return once again to their homes.

I lost my jackknife several weeks ago and could use another if you can find one. I just can't seem to hang on to my knives.

Jim fears he will have to have a double hernia operation. Well, he's been lucky in many ways and this has been in the wind a long time so he really isn't too unfortunate. I don't know but what I even envy him a little bit.

I thought I was sending your cameo first class but I just realized that the package should have been completely sealed. Now it probably will travel as an ordinary package. I tried anyway.

Has the old Roman coin I sent arrived yet? I bought that the same day I found the old cameo. Unfortunately I know nothing about coins of that kind, but I bought it so you could have at least one for your collection. If you should want more, let me know and I'll been [sic]
Dear Mother & Dad,

I forgot to mention in my last letter that the package of writing paper also arrived. The cardboard carrier is just the size for carrying.

I snapped some pictures yesterday of refugees fleeing from a nearby Italian town. It’s a pitiful sight, watching whole families trudging along the dusty roads carrying a few meager possessions in their arms, some with small infants also and usually one or two children tagging along behind. A suitcase and a blanket are about all they can manage to bring. Most of the men in the towns the Germans leave are forced to go to northern Italy or Germany in labor battalions. A few manage to escape but not many.

Two young fellows just walked in, telling something about the death of someone from artillery fire. Apparently it was someone in the family and friends of the people at whose house we are now staying. These Italians will never learn to get out of the way when the shells are flying. Some of them want to see everything that is going on.

I went through a series of underground tunnels some of the natives around here are living in while the fighting is going on. They have made themselves wonderful dugouts with room enough to hold probably twenty-five people. I hope the pictures come out clearly, even though they show only the entrance ways.

The weather here too have been terrifically hot but by not moving about much during the day we can keep fairly comfortable. It’s easy to understand why people in this climate tend to live such a leisurely life. I know I would if I could, and do whenever I can.

I hope the news is true concerning the uprisings in Germany. Perhaps the end is really in sight. It can’t come too soon for me.

These women really work but the men – well, I just don’t see them work. They carry the wood, the flour, the water, the grain, do the cooking, the sweeping, etc. – the men eat and talk. Perhaps it is just that the men aren’t visible when they work.

I just read the “Stars & Stripes” of the 24 and if affairs continue to progress the way they have been the war should be over before too many weeks. It looks as if it were up to Russia now. The uphill push in Italy is pretty tough and the fighting in Normandy isn’t pleasant. It is on the flat plains of Poland that the real pushing should continue and apparently it is.

Let me know when you receive the checks and bond – a $25 bond – a $60 check – and a $180 check. Then I can empty my wallet of all the receipts.

Any time you can manage, send me more 35mm. films. I try to be careful not to waste exposures, but when I have plenty in reserve I can shoot to my heart’s content. It won’t take so long to get the negatives to you now and you can have prints made. I know that a few of the pictures I sent really are worth enlarging – especially those wonderful, wonderful ones of
Dear Mother & Dad,

Jim Gallagher is here in Italy now and I received a note from him last evening. I'll enclose his letter for you to read as well as his new address.

Capt. James J. Gallagher
Hq. 34th Inf. Div.
A.P.O. #34
c/o P.M. New York, N.Y.

There isn't much to write today, for we still are living a life of leisure in the same Italian farmhouse. The family has squeezed itself into two rooms and we are living in the three others. We do our cooking in the large main room, using our gasoline stoves and they do theirs in the fire place. We give them chocolate and crackers and half empty cans of food we don't care to finish and they give us tomatoes and draw our water. Occasionally, we use their pans and kettles for preparing some of our culinary delicacies. Before, I often wondered how our ancestors could prepare large meals on an open fire, but now, watching it being done for several meals, I have begun to get the idea. By using the large flame for a large kettle and raking the coals out to do the rest of the cooking you can manage fairly well. I tried for a picture of the fireplace yesterday, but I may sketch it today in case the snap shot doesn't turn out well.

There are living in the house the older people, probably the parents or grand parents whose home this is. Most of the others are members of the younger generations who fled from the cities under German control and came home to live with the old folks. The younger ones wear modern styled clothes and shoes while the older ones usually go about the house and farm barefooted, wear black kerchiefs and live like peasants as we picture them, baking their own bread, having pigeons roost on a perch on the porch, sprinkling the floor with water to keep the dust down and sweeping it with home made brooms. Everything very simple.

What do you think of the sketch? The little hole on the left wall of the fireplace is for cooking also. Coals are shoveled from the fire and placed under the grate and small pans are heated above. The triangular affairs on the narrow shell in the rear have short legs to life them just above the coals and pans are heated thereon. Usually, just a small fire is kept burning under the large kettle which is kept filled with water.

Enough of the travelogue for today. More tomorrow perhaps.

Love,
Son
Dear Trum,

I know it is pretty bad to wait till I am right here with you before I write. But here it is, and here am I. Look at my address and you can tell right where I am. I don't know now that I am so close if I will get to see you. But I guess we can hope for the best.

Got in here last evening (Sat.). Left Washington, where I had to wait for three days, on Wed., the 12 July. I flew over and had a very nice trip. I never want to travel any other way again. But I guess I will have to wait till the war is over.

If we can keep in touch with each other we may be able to get together soon. I hope so. Let me know when you get a day off and we see if we can't cook up something.

Best of Luck neighbor James [Gallagher]

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Dear Mother & Dad,

I've decided not to entirely waste my time here in Italy so I am trying to learn a few words in Italian, enough at least so I'll be able to make myself understood. Naturally I've begun with food and now I can ask for onions and tomatoes, fruit, corn, bread, salt etc. Always thinking of my stomach, you know. In fact, I'm being forced to learn Italian in order to explain to the inquisitive that I am not Italian and neither are my parents. I must have a cosmopolitan look, for in Africa they thought I was French or perhaps Portuguese and now at times I'm Italian. Io sono Americano.

Is it very difficult to buy the camera cases? Chaplain Newman would like a case exactly like the one you sent me if it is possible for you to find one. If you can manage, send one along and the chaplain will send you a check. You see, your purchases made quite a hit.

Oh yes, we are off the line. Thank God.

Another package arrived – cookies, pickles, sardines, potato sticks etc. very good. Keep the food coming – other suggestions – cheese spreads in jars, tuna fish, crackers, chocolate, candies, raspberry jam You know, the usual things.

I believe I have already mentioned that Capt. Stratman has become regimental surgeon and probably will be Major shortly. Now the rest of the bad news has arrived. Capt. Singmaster is going to regiment as assistant regimental surgeon, and the two of them are being replaced
tomorrow. Our new surgeon seems very nice, but there never will be another Capt. Stratman or another Capt. Singmaster. I really hate to see them go, even though it is an advancement for them. The new “table of organization” calls for a 2nd Lt M.A.C as assistant regimental surgeon and our former first sergeant has been commissioned to fill that vacancy. A great many changes are being made.

I read a short squib in “Time”, attributed to Mussolini, that just about fills the bill in regard to my feelings about the Italians. “The Italian people is a superficial people in every way, even in religion. They believe in a saint only when, and to the extent that he answers their prayers. . . .They cover themselves with a varnish that has no depth and leaves no trace.” So true. Too true.

Of course I have always realized to what extent the Bible is a work of history, but not until the other night’s church service was it so forcibly impressed upon me. The Chaplain read the first chapter of Isaiah and it sounded almost like a description of Italy after the war has passed through. Re-read it and see what you think.

Let me know when the packages I sent arrive. I want to make certain you receive them.

Love,
Son

August, 1944
Letter 223, 1944-08-07 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 24

7 August 44

Dear Mother & Dad,

Yes, I know. It has been almost a week since I last wrote, but things have been happening fast and furiously since then. I have some surprising news to tell you, really good news I think, but I’m going to wait another day or so before I tell you all. Are you interested? Have I got you guessing? Good. That’s just what I intended to do. You’ll get nothing more about it in this letter. Not a hint.

I assure you that the writing in this letter will really be a mess, for I’m scribbling away by candle light in my pup tent, lying on my back with my head propped up on my barracks bag. If you can follow it you are doing well.

I have sent a check for another hundred dollars. It probably will have reached you by the time this letter does.

The last couple of days I have been hunting madly about in search of a 116 camera for the film you sent recently. Tonight I was finally able to locate one, and I came down to the tent to load the camera. You know the rest. The film wasn’t 116. It was 35mm wrapped in 116 boxes. I never could understand why you were sending me those larger films anyway. Now I can really go to town with my own camera and shoot to my heart’s content. You can keep the film coming however, for the more I have the more I can click away.

I’m enclosing a negative of a snap taken the other day. It looks only fairly clear, but I think it will be worth printing. Hogan, the fellow who took the photo, has some pictures we took

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when we were sightseeing in Rome and also some of the country we saw while hiking through
the mountains. He will make some prints for me also, so at least I'll have a few views that I
feared I would miss.

Three packages have reached me recently, but now I can’t list the contents of any one box.
This may give you a hint. The package with the two films arrived, also the pickles (which were
excellent, dad.) spice cake, sardines, tuna, potato sticks, caramels, nuts. And on and on.

Haven’t any of my packages from reached you yet? [sic] Some should be arriving shortly.

I honestly do see how the war can last much longer, do you? Always an optimist. That’s
me.

Not a long letter, I know, but I'll be writing again shortly.

Love,
Son

Letter 224, 1944-08-08 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 24

Dear Mother & Dad,

This evening I read a photostatic copy of the July 9th issue of the “Muskogee Daily Phoenix”,
telling about some of the activities of the 88th Division since it went overseas. Why don't you
try to locate that issue, for you will be able to follow some of our activities. Naturally, Gen.
Sloan emphasized what the men from Oklahoma had accomplished, for he was writing for
the people of that state, but you can still pick up the names of some of the towns we passed
through.

Oh, yes, I was discharged from the army this afternoon. I haven't received the actual
papers yet, but I expect to have them in my hands in a day or so. Nice news isn't it? I hardly
expected it to happen so soon, but you know how the army is. Or do you know how the army
is? Always springing surprises. This was one of their latest. I went to personnel today and
signed the discontinuation of my insurance and bonds and also signed for my discharge and
the closing of my service records.

I'm enclosing a news clipping that I know will interest you. Undoubtedly you remember my
description of my sightseeing trip to Rome – the one with the woman guide. One of the medics
who was with me, Kenneth Vance, also a former teacher, wrote home about his tour, and an
account of his activities was printed in his local hometown paper. There are a few errors in the
report, but it nevertheless does give a fairly comprehensive view of our sightseeing that day.
He got an extra copy of the item for me, knowing that I would certainly enjoy having one.

Are you all excited about the discharge? Do you wonder what brought it about? Are you
wondering if it means I am coming home? Those are pertinent questions aren't they? But
what are the answers? That must be what you are most interested in. And I bet you wish I
would quit fooling around and tell you the real news. Isn't that true. Well, I won't. Just keep
guessing. Tomorrow I'll tell all. Not before.

Kenny is developing some pictures for me tonight – rather printing some from negatives of
the others. Unfortunately I didn’t have a camera when we were fighting through the mountains, but Hogan did, and managed to salvage a few films from all his others that were stolen. Some are looking down into Fondi from the mountain heights above it, some are views of Rocca-gorga and others of Santa Maria (which fortunately our regiment was not called upon to attack), and some taken in Rome when Hogan was sightseeing with Vance and I. I’ll send them along as quickly as I can.

“Discharge! Discharge! What does he mean, discharge”. Wouldn’t you like to know? Martin Betonio, my tent mate, and I are having a little snack tonight – tongue spread on crackers and synthetic orange juice. Unfortunately there seems to be little fruit in this particular area we are now in, and the grapes that are in abundance are not yet ripe. I guess I’ll just have to fall back on my boxes from home.

I really have an enormous number of letters to answer, but I just don’t seem to get around to it. Maybe I’ll find time one of these days. In the meantime, make my excuses for me, won’t you?

I still haven’t heard from Martha since the wedding. Strange that she doesn’t write, but I suppose she is quite busy. Probably some letters are on the way now.

No, I haven’t seen Buddy or Jim yet. Maybe soon, I hope.

9 August 44

Well, the new day has arrived and now for the news. Have you been guessing? Well, good. First let me quote from your letter which I received this evening. “Tell Captain Singmaster I am very happy to hear of his promotion. Why doesn’t he put in a few good words for you so you could have his old rank as long as his helmet liner fits your head” Unquote.

Well, he’d already taken the hint. Have you looked carefully at the return address? I’ll wait while you do. Surprising isn’t it? To you as well as to me.

Here’s the news. I was recommended for a combat commission by the Major and a short time ago I received word that I had received my appointment. All this discharge business meant simply that I was discharged from the army as an enlisted man, and for a few hours I was almost a civilian again. Then I was sworn in as an officer.

Today at one o’clock, after running up and down the hill several times to straighten out the papers, the Regimental S-1, Lt. McKenna, gave me the “oath of office”, and I became a 2nd Lt. in the Medical Administration Corp. Unfortunately this means that I will have to leave all my old friends in the 88th and go to an entirely new outfit, for all the vacancies have been filled. Fifth Army has assigned me to the 450th A.A.A. (Anti Aircraft Artillery) where I will be Assistant Battalion Surgeon (believe it or not). Winters and Bost from their battalion have previously received their commissions and are assigned to this regiment, and after hearing the assignment I received became most jealous. Can you blame them? From the infantry to anti aircraft. Really nice – I think. There may be a hitch to it. I’ll let you know about that later. The officers wanted me to return to the regiment but Gen Clarke thought otherwise. Even the surgeons are envious. In fact, anyone I have spoken to would gladly change places with me.

As yet I do not know what my address will be, so you had better wait before writing. In a few days I will be in my new location and then will give you my mailing address immediately.

Ulman has also been recommended, but the General forgot to sign his papers the day he signed mine and consequently his appointment has not yet arrived. I’m sure it will be along shortly. I do hope so.
No news about all this in the news papers and such. Those whom I want to know will learn soon anyway. As for the others, they don't matter. I don't like all that picture business, news accounts and such. The people at home just don't understand what being an officer means and from what I read, don't make any attempt to find out. The same goes for all those badges and honors some of the fellows write home about. They try to make all this war business sound glorious and glamorous by telling about all the honors and commissions people have bestowed upon them. Many times, if they knew the true story they would realize how unimportant such things really are. Badges don't mean much to those who have really been in the fighting and neither does a commission. Officers aren't as important as some people pretend. They are necessary but are not demi-gods. Natually I'm pleased to have been chosen, but let me assure you it hasn't gone to my head. I'm still the same except that a gold bar has replaced the stripes. If being an officer I can further help bring to the completion this war, I'll be satisfied.

This last paragraph is a rambling mess isn't it? Maybe I'll be able to explain myself more clearly later. I'll surely try.

Love,
Son

Letter 225, 1944-08-10 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 24

August 10, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm still here with the 350th and as yet I haven't learned when I am to move. In fact, no one seems to be able to tell me much about anything. Today I signed a few papers, but as yet I have not collected my pay or received my clothing allowance ($250). I don't know where the 450th is or how I am to find them. I'm not worrying, though, for everything will work out all right.

I'm having my troubles, however, getting bars and insignia. I borrowed a medical insignia and bar from Bost, and was able to locate two others at special service, but that is the limit of my purchases. I made an aiming stake for my helmet using a strip of adhesive and coloring it yellow with an atebrine pill. Will you do your best to relieve the situation? Buy me three medical insignia with an A for administration superimposed and four or five sets of gold bars. Send them air mail, please, spacing them in your letters so that they arrive as soon as possible. If you have much trouble, however, don't search too far, for I probably will be able to find some anyway. The Army and Navy store would perhaps be the best place to look.

Now that I'm sporting my bars, I can no longer eat with the enlisted men and so I am forced to associate with the upper brackets. I'm staying at the regimental aid station and so eat with regimental headquarters company – Colonels, Majors and all. A day or two ago I couldn't have entered their dining room, and now, because I have donned a couple of pieces of metal, my whole being and personality has been so thoroughly metamorphized that I have become one of the circle. “What fools these mortals be.”

I can't get used to being an officer. All the salutes of the guards still floor me, for half the
time I don't realize they are meant for me until it is nearly too late to return it. I'll get used to it, I know, but it will take time.

I'm slipping in a few snap shots that were taken recently and developed by Kenny. I have a good many more to send but I'll get them to you gradually. I'll probably break your bank account getting these things enlarged and printed most of the fellows want copies of the pictures they are in so after a while have some copies made and send them to me. Or better still, I'll get their home addresses and you can send them there.

Love,
Son

Letter 226, 1944-08-13 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 24

August 13, 1944

Dear Mother and Dad,

I'll start this letter today but won't mail it until tomorrow when at long last a jeep will be available for use. I really hate to leave, for all the friends I have made since coming into the army are here and I know I'll never find two medical officers like Capt. Stratman and Capt. Singmaster. Of course, after a short time I most likely will feel at home in the AAA, Naturally everyone looks forward with dislike to changes and I am no exception. Not knowing exactly what I am going into or what will be expected of me, I must say I am a little uneasy. I always feel that way when trying something new so this is no new experience for me. Everything will work out for the best, especially since the AAA right now is considered a rear echelon [sic] outfit, far from the front and the actual fighting. I have had enough of that stuff to be most happy to escape to the rear. Everyone is most envious of my good fortune, and it is especially hard on those who did a little underhanded work to keep themselves in this particular detachment and thus spoiled their own chances of getting the break I did.

Just to help me remember in case I forget I'll list a few of the fellows I have been working with – John Weick, Walter Schoeneman, Sam Ruben, Don Plank, Hazen Roper, Martin Betonio, Theodore Couch, John Roach, Russell Redfern, Walter Chapman, Jess Amick, Theodore Belisle, Jim Kratky, Ralphie Vahle, Gerard Dowdy, Francis Weatherman, Fred Seery, Raymond Platt, Clyde Dees, Norm Hoeflling, Kenny Goodman, Harry Schenck. And now for some others outside our third battalion – Seth Ulman, Fred Roth, Kenneth Vance, Ray Eaton, Earl Winter, Ernest Wise, Clarence Hogan, William Saunders, Eleftherios Efstratus, Bob Miller, Fosner, Doug Allenbrook, Crane,

[this letter was typewritten and apparently unfinished. TW appears to have had a sense that he was writing for history as his listing of the names has a sense of writing for posterity about it.]
August 14, 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I’ve arrived and have begun to settle myself in my new location. As yet I’m rather at sea as to what is what, but everything is ritzy I’m certain. I’ve had more M.P.’s with red kerchiefs saluting me today than I’ve seen in many a day. These rear echelon positions are really the thing. You would scarcely know the war is on back here.

Here is the surprise for you. The 450th A.A.A. is an all negro outfit with the exception of the officers. When the Texas boys in the 88th hear where I am they will have fits, for many are the discussions we have had over the negro problem. They probably will be running down just to look over the situation.

The medical officers seem very nice and all the boys really like them – if that is any sign. And I think it is. One captain’s name is DeSario from Philadelphia and the other officer is Parrot, the man whose position I apparently am to take. The new T/O [Table of Organization] does not allow him to remain in the organization, a MAC [Medical Administrative Corpsman] being appointed to fill his place.

The adjutant seems most pleased that I have come for he most honestly feels that someone should be here to look after the records. Apparently he feels that I won’t be just excess baggage, and for that I am grateful. I was fearful that I might be considered just an added attraction for which there is no real use. Now I’ve become a little more at ease.

Be sure to give my new address to Martha, and Phebe, Barbara C. Fox, Esther Olson, Divvy and Mary, Anita, Mrs. Morris etc. You know the usual people.

The Warrant Officer (Bishop) in the S-1 office [Personnel] invited me to bunk in his tent with him so naturally I accepted. He has his own wall tent and so that makes only two of us in the one tent. He seems like a really swell fellow. He even has his own radio so you can see how I am living now in comparison to life in an infantry division. Of course I haven’t acclimated myself yet, but I feel that everything is going to work out fine.

Don’t worry much about getting bars for me, I have been able to get a couple more sets and that will hold me for a while. A couple of caduceus, however, still will be fine.

I’ll gradually be sending home some of my negatives for you to keep and have prints made for some of the fellows in the shots. In the two sets I’m sending today make some copies of Ulman (sitting on the wall) and one for the Red Cross girl who is washing her mess gear.

More tomorrow. I think I’ll have time to write more often now – that is when I can manage to get the medical records organized. Don’t expect regular letters however.

Love,
Son

16 August 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Love,
Son
Missed writing last evening, but will try to finish a note this evening. I took an awful kidding from Capt. Singmaster when he knew I was going to an Ack Ack outfit, but today the shoe is on the other foot. He walked in to visit me. He is on a special training mission back here and so he too is to be away from the 88th for several weeks at least. I'm hoping to see him tomorrow night and go out for the evening. Several other officers from the 88th are with him.

The enclosed cartoon speaks for itself.

It really is wonderful to have a radio right in the tent with me. Many of the best programs from the states have been recorded and we receive excellent entertainment, especially after being away from it for so long.

I hope to go to the main 5th Army P.X. tomorrow to buy myself some clothes. I have the sorriest collection of clothes of any lieutenant in Italy I am quite certain. My barracks bag was rifled months ago and so I have little left. However, I did receive a $250 clothing allotment when I received my commission, and I am planning to spend a portion of that to spiff myself up a bit. However, don't worry. I'll be sending home a check for a portion of that one of these days.

I've changed my allotments so that regularly you will be receiving $75 monthly and a $50 war bond. That will not begin until September's pay, however. Do you think this is just as wise? I can always change the arrangements but the bonds can always be cashed. If you think the cash would be more sensible, be sure to say so.

How about another box? I know that all you are waiting for is a request, so here goes. You know the usual things I like – crackers, caramels, pickles (take it easy on the nuts and gum), potato sticks, mayonnaise, gum drops. How is that? Enough for once?

Perhaps I'll go swimming tonight so I'll cut this short. A snappy ending, what?

Love,
Son

P.S. Do you recognize the girl in the clipping? From Time if I remember correctly.
Send me a copy of the picture of Ulman.
you know that right here, even though there is a war in progress, there are compensations.

For several days now I have received no mail, but naturally that I due to the fact that it has not yet been rerouted. Soon I should be hearing from you again. I’m intending to mail my discharge papers home for you to keep for me. Would that they were the final ones.

We eat fairly well here, much better than we did in the other outfit. These colored boys can do a good job cooking – when they get the proper rations. Otherwise they do their best, but which with C rations can never be satisfactory. At least we eat from plates and sit at tables, a fact that in itself shows marked improvement over previous conditions. I think I’m beginning to enjoy it here.

Mr. Bishop knows Major Lawrence in the 5th Army Surgeon General’s Office and introduced me to him a couple of nights ago. He seems like a really swell fellow and he offered to help me any time I ran into difficulties I couldn’t straighten out. Fine of him, for I could tell that he really meant what he said. I did go back to the Surgeon’s office today to get some information about some records but didn’t contact him personally. The captain I did talk to, however, was just as eager to be of service. They are a most cooperative group.

The Kate Smith program is singing away on the radio right now.

Many of the officers I am seeing now have been overseas a great many months, and most were involved in the African, Sicilian, Salerno and Anzio invasions. They have some great tales to tell, many of the stories being “inside dope” that you never read about in the newspapers – trying to buy brooms in Africa to clean up an area for a hospital – ambulances being riddled by our own machine guns as they aimed at low flying planes, incorrect landing positions in Sicily, miles from the designated spots, some stories about shooting down our own planes in Sicily, the location of 5th Army Headquarters at Salerno miles ahead of the division C.P.’s. Just little interesting tidbits, not important militarily now, but fascinating sidelong on this business of war. Those are the stories that really are history, not the cold tabulations in the history tome. Perhaps that is why history is so fascinating to me, for I like the little, personal intimate stories about the past as well as the big movements. Put them together and you have something really great.

You never tell me anything about how you are feeling. Any more doctor’s visits? And how about those teeth? Oh yes, I know the weather is too hot now – just as it was last December. If you don’t have them taken care of before I come home I shall be most disgusted.

Remember that long ago I asked for a good photograph of you both. – not just a snap shot but a good picture made by a professional? Why don’t you get a small one made and send it along?

Love,
Son

Letter 230, 1944-08-19 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 24

19 August 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,
Mail tonight! August 5th and 6th. And that isn't bad, considering the fact that it had to travel a circuitous route before reaching me. Now I expect that it will arrive quite regularly.

What a life! Swimming in the blue Mediterranean (or Turreanean) this afternoon! The water is wonderful. Strong waves and warm, beating on a sandy beach. Now that I've started, I'll be wanting to run down to the shore every day. Even there you run into the war, though, for the German barbed wire entanglements and old gun positions are still in place. It will be years before the final evidences of the war disappear from Europe. Maybe it will be good to leave a few about to remind the war mongers of all the horrors they let forth upon civilization.

I had a tuna fish sandwich last night made from a can of tuna I had left from my last packages. It really tasted wonderful, for we don't get anything of that sort over here.

Yes, occasionally I get the Danbury new and the magazines come very regularly. The mail service really is very good except for packages. There are very slow in arriving.

We have a visitor in our tent tonight – a red headed Englishman. He drops in ever so often to listen to the radio and to talk and to smoke American cigarettes – and tonight to get some of our rations. Bishop manages to get 10 in 1 rations to supplement our daily meals and so we fare fairly well. Keep your packages coming and we really will eat royally. The idea of frankfurters is excellent. A little mustard would help too. Crackers, jam, chicken, tuna fish etc. Fill up the box as well as you usually do.

I think I'll go to the beach again this evening. It's in my blood. I'm to the seas again. The lonely seas and the skies.

Love,
Son

Letter 231, 1944-08-20 (back to Table of Contents)

20 August 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I don't know why I bought the swimming trunks for there is no need for wearing them. I'm becoming a real European and go swimming just as I am, nothing more, and certainly nothing less. The sun and water and sand are wonderful. This honestly is just like a vacation. No one here really works hard, for there are so few German planes left to even be used in France, that seldom is one encountered in Italy. Of course, I have work to do, but in comparison to my previous job, it is just like loafing.

I managed to get to the P.X. warehouse today and bought a few clothes – 2 O.D. shirts, 1 pair of green (called green but really brown) trousers, 1 pair of oxfords (very cheap but they will do), 1 overseas cap, and three pairs of cloth gold bars. I can't find a green shirt and I'm not planning to buy a blouse right away – they are much too expensive and I can't see that I'll ever wear one overseas.

If we are to be over here this winter, and I fear that will be the case, even if the war should be over before then, there are a few things I will want. Be on the look out for them so that you can ship them if it looks as if we will be here. It gets cold you know, so item one is a pair
of gloves, good warm ones. You know, mittens might not be a bad idea either. Remember the kind I used to have? See what you can do if it begins to look as if I will need them. A brown, knitted sleeveless sweater would also be valuable, and a brown wool scarf. Then come little items that will come in handy any time – a deodorant, a wrist watch band, a good, strong bristled toothbrush, a little pocket dictionary. Look around home and see if you can find any shirts (called greens) and let me know the price. They usually are much cheaper over here, so don’t buy one ‘til you hear from me. Still try to get me the M.A.C. insignia. They are very difficult to find over here, and disappear from the market almost as soon as they appear. I really have plenty of gold bars now, so don’t worry about getting them for me. Stick in a wash cloth or so for packing in some future packages. All of mine have disappeared. I’m not using many films now, but when you can salvage some from the market, do so. I did manage to rescue my moccasins from all the items confiscated from my barracks, so I am most fortunate in that respect.

One of the Italian propaganda programs from northern Italy was assailing us a few minutes ago. They really are extremely poor, and if the Italians were taken in by such tripe, they certainly are poor specimens of humanity. They emphasize rumors, supposedly emanating from Washington or London, telling how we refused to let Jewish troops go into the line because in the last war they couldn’t even handle mule trains. They should talk. I’ve seen Italian mule skinners try to take care of mules – and it was the American soldier who did all the work, even to showing them how to fasten the load. However, the items most obviously were German inspired and directed, just about the level their channeled minds are able to absorb. Honestly, I have talked to very intelligent German prisoners (a surprising number of whom speak English), who will go so far in a discussion and then resort to all the canned, trite statements Hitler & colleagues have befuddled them with. Often you can detect that they see you are right but they don’t want to face the facts. Others can think straight just so far and then go no further. Their minds being blocked by the incessant pounding of perverted thinking they have been subjected to.

I suppose by now you realize that many of the letters I wrote when I was first in Italy were descriptions of the front as I was seeing it. At the time I didn’t want you to worry about me, so I didn’t write that we were seeing the fighting until the newspapers spread the news. Remember the picture of the aid station I drew? That was in a little town on the northern side of the Garigliano (I’m still not allowed to mention it by name) that daily took a terrific pounding from the German artillery and mortars. We relieved the British there, and for a time wore British helmets in order that Jerry would not know the change had been made. I think the first black, rainy night we splashed our way up into that half ruined little town was the worst night I have ever spent in my life, not because of what happened, but because of fear of the unknown and dread of what might happen. I’ll tell you about it some time.

Love,
Son

Letter 232, 1944-08-21 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 24
Dear Mother & Dad,

Hot? It's terrifically hot. Even after just coming from swimming the perspiration is trickling down my forehead. This country really os not very pleasant in the heat of summer, especially under wartime conditions. Speeding down the main, paved highway is comfortably cooling, but once you hit the traffic choked secondary roads, jeep riding is another matter. The sand on these roads is so finely pulverized that the wearing of colored glasses is a matter of necessity, not for protection from the glare of the sun alone, but so that the clouds of swirling dust that envelope the vehicles do not hit you squarely in the eyes. Many also wear issued dust masks or improvise protections of handkerchiefs tied over the lower part of the face like the Western bad men. At times the dust becomes so thick you can scarcely see the cars approaching from the opposite direction. Many drivers resort to head lights in the brilliance of a bright Italian day, while others just dash blindly ahead. Clean clothes that I have just received at a shower unit have become so coated with the fine dust that the perspiration about my neck and wrists has caked it like mud unto the shirt itself.

These dusty roads are dangerous, too, as well as uncomfortable. They make excellent targets for enemy artillery. When even one vehicle is moving over such a highway, an observer can follow every turn it makes by the cloud that rises above it as the wheels grind away. And those dust clouds can be seen for miles from some of the observation points the Jerries have. You think rain would help! Don't you believe it. The water simply puts a coating of grease on the path and then you can scarcely stay on the route. I've seen jeeps and even ambulances slide sideways off a road that but a few minutes before was thick with dust.

Say, the news from France really sounds great, doesn't it? Let's just pray that conditions continue as good as they are now.

Too hot to rave on any longer. Buena Sera, Son

21 August 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm enclosing a money order for $100. More will follow before too long.

One of the boys (Redfern) from the 350th dropped in to see me today, so I guess they haven't forgotten all about me. He told me about their movements, etc. since I left them.

I bought myself $2.00 worth of stamped air mail envelopes today, and they will hold me for a good long time along with the many loose stamps I have.

Swimming again this afternoon I have also been collecting some unusually colored stones on the shore while swimming; and if I think they are decent enough, I will pack them off to you. They really might make some interesting costume jewelry. Anyway, they are souvenirs of Italy, whatever that may make them. It is a most unexpected sight to see a group of grown men, without any clothes on, squatting on the seashore sorting over the bits of stone that have

23 August 1944
Dear Mother & Dad,

This will be another short note, for I'm planning to go swimming before too late this evening. I want to enjoy the beach while I can. This afternoon I was busy getting supplies and returned to the area just in time for supper.

I'm enclosing a note [Cf., August 13th typewritten letter] I began several days ago and found in my jacket this morning. Not important, but thought you might like it.

I wrote before for you not to buy me “green” shirt, but since then I have changed my mind, Buy me a 15 ½ x 33 (or approx. that) and ship it off so it will get here quickly. I'm not in any special hurry, but I want it before winter sets in. “Green” is the name but it looks dark brown. Any army store will know what you mean.

A package arrived in yesterday's mail, and came most opportunely, for we were beginning to run short. I know you always like to check that they arrive so I'll suggest the contents – sardines, tuna, chicken, crackers, 2 pkgs. fruit powder etc. – all in fine condition. I get plenty of fruit juices here, for nearly every evening Mr. Bishop gets a large can of some kind from the kitchen and we drink until we can hold no more. With occasional ten in one’s we get along but it is the variety from home that really is good.

I've passed by the area, where I know Jim Gallagher must be, several times during the past few days, but I can't find time to stop. I certainly hope I see him before we move from this section. Almost every time I locate someone either the other person or I pull away. Haven't yet seen Jim Warburton or Buddy Wallin – or Jack Gilbert who also should be nearby.

I want to tell you sometime about what Capt. Singmaster calls “cracking the Brazil nuts.” Right now the tales I'd tell probably would be considered valuable military information, so I'll refrain. I'm just inserting this as a reminder for some future date. Ask me about it later or otherwise I'll forget.

As I was speeding down the highway today, the thought came to me that probably you people at home can't even picture what life behind the front lines is like. I know I would never imagine it as it is if I hadn't seen it myself. No, you don't continuously hear artillery booming or see streams of bleeding men pouring away from the front lines, far behind the lines doesn’t mean just a mile or two from the actual fields where the infantry are battling, but miles and miles, stretching from the front to the ports where the materiel is unloaded. Even close to the front the traffic is heavy, but on the main paved highways leading to the distribution points, trucks, ambulances, jeeps, tanks, roll by by the hundreds. It looks like Sunday on the Henry Hudson Parkway. Really. All the entrances to main installations and cross roads have M.P.’s
to direct traffic. Even by-passes are built at intersections to make one way traffic regulations effective. Vehicles speed up and down, passing, cutting in and out like regulation New Jersey drivers. As you come closer to the front, traffic is a little less congested but still very heavy. Believe it or not, when you reach country in artillery range there are signs indicating the fact and M.P.’s to direct you to lower your windshield and cover it for glare, and to have you don your steel helmet. Then you drive on as usual. Of course, signs are not always there, and many are the times we have driven along for great distances under enemy observation unknowingly until we spied a little, make shift, card board notice to convoys to keep fifty yards apart so the trucks would not make such excellent targets. The farmers are still in their farmyards, so their presence or absence gives no hint. Sometimes at night you can see the artillery flashes, but all big guns don’t necessarily have a bright flash. Just recently I have ridden about, looking off into enemy land across the Arno, and been able to see the smoke pots spewing their smudge in order to camouflage our movements. Honestly, the war doesn’t seem real until you are up near our own artillery. Then you really [are] on the front. And a great percentage of men over here have not been on the front, or at least have not stayed there any length of time. When you read the news account about “so-and-so” being on the Italian “fighting front” don’t immediately picture him as dodging artillery shells or even small arms fire. Most likely he is one of the boys dashing about in overseas caps, on the highways in the rear, and finding life only slightly inconvenienced by Jerry. If he is in the infantry, or tanks, or some engineer outfits, he’s really seeing the fighting. Otherwise, very likely, he’s the kind of person I meant when I asked you to put no news items in the paper about my commission. He wants the headlines and hasn’t seen anything yet. I’m not implying that these fellows aren’t important, for they really are. Many of them work hard, terribly hard, and are just as important in winning the war as the fighting man is, for without each other, neither could survive. What I don’t like is for them to pose as heroes, braving the fire and dangers for the glory of the country “or” because of their burning patriotism, or for some other glitteringly phrased reason. They are there because they have to be, and are working to get the war over with so they can get the war over with and return home, and be more free to do their own living an dying. Patriotism is not what the phrases of the politicians try to imply. It means simply getting the job done and returning to life in the United States – and “life in the U.S.” represents so much more than those phrase builders or even the soldiers themselves comprehend, that it is really what is behind all their fighting moral.

End of sermon! Heaven sakes, what brought all that on, anyway?

And incidentally, I am now one of those boys, running around on the roads at the rear – Thanks God.

Love,
Son

Letter 235, 1944-08-27 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 24
I have just received a letter from Truman telling me of the wonderful news. I can imagine how proud you both must be of him. He most certainly attained his commission the hard way. As I have already told him in answer to his letter: I can think of no one I would rather salute. In fact I have hopes of being able to do just that within the next few weeks.

Mrs. Warner, I have been late in answering your letter I know. It has taken something like this news of Trum to move me, but at any rate – I mean well.

I am glad you liked the flowers, and you needn't have been afraid of “spilling the beans” to Aunt Phebe. The few flowers that I was able to send you do very little toward expressing the gratitude that I feel toward the kindness that you and Mr. Warner and Truman have always shown me. I only wish I could have sent something better.

Trum tells me that he is in a rear echelon, (which is very good news) and that at last he is getting a chance to rest. I hope he remains in the rear for the duration.

I expect to be finished with my combat training by the 13th of Sept. or maybe even earlier. It is possible that our section will receive a short “delay” before shipping over. If so, I will call on you. Don't tell Aunt Phebe – I want to surprise her.

Love to all, Jimmie [Birtles]

[28 August 1944]

Dear Mother & Dad,

Yesterday was visitors’ day here. Bob Klein and Don Plank (who received my T/3 rating) hitchhiked down from their bivouac area to see me in my new job, and we spent the afternoon splashing about in the water. Before we got back to the tent, Seth had arrived in search of me, sporting his new gold bars, which he had received the previous day. It seemed to take a long time for his commission to come through, but it was worth waiting for, since he also has been assigned to an antiaircraft battalion. His is the 630th A.A.A., a white outfit, but a very excellent one I understand. He wanted to find out from me what kind of setup we have, the type of records we keep, etc., just to place himself and make himself more at ease about his new job. He is perfectly capable, but it always makes anyone feel better not to go into a new position blindfolded.

I bought myself a trench coat today, $31.50 I believe, was the price. I'll need something this fall and winter, and it also can serve as a raincoat. I know it will be very warm, for it is very heavy and is made with a removeable wool lining. I just happened on them in the P.X. warehouse and decided to buy it when I could. They tell me that last winter they were extremely scarce and there was a great demand for them. They really are very sporty looking and can be worn in civilian life with no difficulty, for they are similar to my reversible coat and top coat in texture. Mine also has a detachable hood that may prove very valuable when the cold blasts blow. Gradually I'm building up my wardrobe, but only very slowly. I hate to go into this clothes business too hurriedly without knowing exactly what I need or really want. I suppose I should buy a dress blouse, but they cost $45 or more, and those who brought them
overseas with them have worn them about once. It seems foolish to buy one if I won't use it more than that. I'll wait and see. Oh yes, I also bought a pair of coveralls. Now one wears them here, but I may want them sometime (and I have always wanted a pair). The last is probably the reason I bought them, to be truthful.

Haven't any of the packages I sent from Rome arrived yet? They should be coming before too long now. Be sure to let me know when they reach you, for I'm beginning to wonder about them.

Have the negatives I have been sending in my last few letters been arriving safely. When those with individuals arrive make some prints and send them back so I can forward them to those who are in them.

Love,
Son

Letter 237, 1944-08-29
29 August 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

What a meal! What a meal! I just finished the best meal, I have had since coming into the army. Listen to the menu and you will understand why I am raving: - roast chicken, dressing, gravy, fried string potatoes, green peas, lemonade, and ice cream. Yes, really. And in a combat outfit. And the food was wonderfully prepared – not the usual army style of cooking, but almost like home cooking, but not quite. These colored boys can really cook.

My mail is gradually catching up to me. Today I received about eight letters and that was wonderful after going without so long.

You wrote that the packages are beginning to arrive. I'm not sure exactly which ones you are receiving, so I'll try to list the boxes I can remember sending and you check on their arrival. I'm afraid I don't have them clearly in my mind either:

1. Leather boxes – already received
2. Large art book in Italian
3. Cigar box full of cameos – already received
4. Large box full of a variety of articles – cameos – coins – box – cards – etc. already received
5. Package of maps etc. of Rome, guide book
6. K-Ration carton – with cameo & carving from Capri
7. Perhaps another one from Rome, the contents of which I can't recall (prob. it exists only in my imagination.

No, I can't remember how many negatives I have sent. Just trust to luck that they arrive. Some of the ones I have been sending recently are streaked in the developing but can be brushed off with a damp cloth & all the water streaks will disappear. Be sure that is done before you hold them up to a strong light. Be sure to print them, for they are especially interesting to me. They were taken in the blazing sun and that is why they are so black, but should print well if done carefully. They are scenes I snapped from a moving truck. All the
film I have developed is now on its way. I'll have to get busy again and finish the film I now have in my camera. Soon we'll be in scenic country again, probably, and I'll be shooting like mad, probably. (Stupid letter, isn't it?)

You are going to give me one of the cameos to grandma aren't you? One of the large ones, of the size similar to Martha's.

Yes, I would like to see Pisa & Florence, too, but not until the German artillery moves back a little further. They are still shelling both of those cities or were recently, according to the "Stars and Stripes," and causing considerable damage.

So mother worries more about the money in your pocket than she does about when you go fishing. That's going pretty far.

Don't worry. I'm really not getting thin. And here, that would be impossible.

I was sorry to hear about Richard Rice but certainly am glad his wounds are only "slight." I think I'll write him a note. The surprise should either kill or cure him.

This is a busy afternoon. Ever since chow this noon I have been sitting on my cot trying to think of brilliant topics to discuss in this letter. Nothing came. You'll have to take this poor attempt for what little it is worth.

Love,
Son

Letter 238, 1944-08-28 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 24

V-Mail
To
Lt. Truman A. Warner
From
Capt. J. Gallagher
HQ 34th Inf Div
28 Aug 44

Congratulations. You can be very proud of your promotions. They don't hand out battlefield commissions to everyone. You have to earn them the hard way.

If the 450th AAA Bn (and by the way how do you like the change in color) is where it was on 18 Aug, and I imagine it probably is, I know where you are. At that time we were nearby resting, but now we are quite aways away. I don't know how soon I will be able to see you it all depends on what we are doing and the distance. You will read about us in the papers. I will keep in touch with you and maybe we can get together. Best of luck.

Jim

Letter 239, 1944-08-31 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 24

255
Dear Mother & Dad,

My mail is still extremely slow catching up with me. None yesterday, and today the P.O. is being moved and so naturally another gap has appeared in the schedule. Only old mail has come so far, none in answer to the letter of the 9th. I'm waiting with interest your reply to that note. Did it floor you – almost?

Even at night, with light so scarce that the stars glisten like individual pinpoints, we wear sunglasses. This morning, driving through the clouds of dust that befog a traveler's view (if we could see the view) every available sun glass was perched on dusty noses and clipped over dust whitened ears. Night and day the fine powder swirls as the terrifically heavy traffic rolls up and down the highways. Instead of the distance, here drivers talk about the surface of the road. Is it paved or secondary? Dirt roads mean one thing – not distance – not bumps – not curves – but dust. After a ride this morning, I snapped a picture of the occupants of our jeep covered with their heavy frosting – faces, hands, hair, clothing thick with dust. Perhaps the picture will show you what I mean.

I'm reading “A Subtreasury of American Humor” by E.B. & K.S. White, (editors), published in the armed services editions. This is only an abridged addition [sic] but is excellent. You might enjoy reading it yourself.

I don't believe I'll need to have sugar mailed to me any more. Now it is more readily accessible, so don't continue to weight up the packages with it.

I believe I told you that my ballot arrived. Now, please make sure that I receive a list of candidates for all parties, especially electors and in the local elections. If there are some particularly good articles (for either or both sides), clip them from the papers and send them along. Don't just give me that anti Roosevelt column from the News-Times. The League of Women Voters probably will be putting out some valuable information along that line.

I fear that a large proportion of the army, especially those overseas, are not planning to make use of the ballot. I just can't understand their attitude. Of course it is a little extra work, but being a citizen in a democracy means that you have to accept such responsibilities. That is supposed to be one of the merits of democracy – allowing a free man to do his own thinking rather than have an oligarchy do it for him. I'm not surprised at their attitude, but rather am annoyed and disgusted. They are not even civic minded enough to express their thoughts. If democracy should become defunct, it will be the people's own faulty and carelessness. Some of them say they shouldn't be forced to vote in a democracy. True, they shouldn't be forced. But if they want to live in the U.S., they should take the responsibilities. Or decide to change the form of government. I could almost write a book on the subject. But I won't – now.

I certainly am pleased that you have been buying books for me occasionally. Keep it up when you find something particularly interesting. Naturally, I can't keep up with the latest books, but since you are saving the Times & Tribune Book Reviews, I'll catch up with them in the future.

I still haven't made up my mind in regard to what to do when I get home – get my teaching job back again or study for a year for my M.A. The new army readjustment program lets the "new" civilians to return to school for a year after service under certain specifications. I hope I qualify, and if I do, I think I'll take advantage of the opportunity. What do you think of the idea. Give me your frank opinion.
September, 1944
Letter 240, 1944-09-02 (back to Table of Contents)
    MS026, box: 35 folder: 25-26

Dear Mother and Dad,

I still haven't received any mail for several days, but I know it isn't because you haven't written. The mail just hasn't caught up to us yet here. Everyone is going without, but we expect some tonight.

Yes, I have a typewriter that I can use now in my “office”. Sounds good, doesn’t it? It is good, too, for we have many more conveniences to work with than I did in the 350th. I have charge of the same type of work that was done at our regimental aid station but not for so many men – all types and kinds of reports and records. Some of them I am not too well acquainted with for I didn’t use all of them, but fortunately before I left I picked up a great deal of information about them from Earl Winter who did all that work in regiment. Here we have a field desk, a box in which we file our records, a large chest for clerical supplies, a typewriter, and two clerks to help me. Fortunately, one of the boys is a fairly fast typist. If that end of the job were left to me, we would still be attempting to complete the first days work.

Ulmans new outfit is very close to us here, for I saw the sign branching off the road just a few hundred yards up the dusty path. I don't know whether or not he has reached his assigned post yet, so I have made no attempt to call on him. He knows the number of this organization, so when he comes in I expect to see him drop in here. Jack Gilbert's battalion is also nearby, at least the battalion that I last knew him to be with. His sign points down another sandy and dusty trail, and I hope to investigate that soon too. However, transportation isn't the very best here, and I know what seems to be only a short distance in the jeep, would take a good long time to walk. I think I'll wait for a ride.

The temperature during the day here is terrifically hot, and really doesn't become comfortably cool until about ten at night. Before morning I discover that I have two blankets over me to be able to sleep warm. This is the darnedest country I have seen. Even with nothing on but underwear, the sweat just pours off. No one feels like working and fortunately there is not an excessive amount to be done.

Yes, you can send me more socks, and by all means send me four or five wash cloths. The army doesn’t seem to think that you need to use them, but I differ with them strongly on that point. (And all of mine have somehow disappeared. Someone else must also think they are valuable possessions.)

Capt. Di Sario just brought me in a bunch of grapes, so any blots or scratches from here on can be credited to the fruit. We are located in a vineyard and so can readily replenish our larder, with grapes at least. Most of the grapes raised here are for wine and can’t begin to compare with our great, purple New England variety. Even the far famed Italian grapes don’t measure up to our standards.

You won’t mind too much if I practice my typing on you, I hope. If I become proficient enough, I'll be able to do my own typing on my master's thesis as well as the other required
work when I get back to my studies. Still looking ahead you see. You can’t keep an old student away from his books.

Love,
Son

1830
(6:30 to you)

Well, the mail did come in tonight and some of the old mail arrived at last. – and one dated the 25th from you, dad. Apparently, from the address, you had received word of my change but you said nothing about it, having already laid me low in another letter I presume. Well, those letters in between should be arriving soon.

If you were over here with me now, you would never believe a war is being fought a comparatively few miles from here. After chow tonight I had to laugh at the scene in front of the row of officers’ tents. Each was sitting in his folding chair, reading, talking, smoking, writing – no more ill convenience than if he were vacationing in the mountains and were spending the evening relaxing on the veranda of his hotel. In fact, they did look like vacationers and nothing else. I tell you, this is a hard life. The scene was completed by one of the younger generation, a captain playing on the ground with his dog, rolling about at the foot of the adults.

Received a note from Jim Warburton today, but I feel he now is great many miles from here. Maybe some day he’ll move this close to the front.

Love,
Son

Letter 241, 1944-09-03 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 25-26

3 September 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

More mail this evening, confirming the news that you have heard of my advancement. Also a card from Esther Olson, magazine stories from Mrs. Morris (thank her for me. I’ll write later), a News-Times, and several Newsweeks and Times.

The Book Review section reviewed the Beard’s latest book “The Beards Basic History of the United States” The New Home Library (69¢). Buy a copy for me, please, and mail to first class, if possible. It shouldn’t weigh too much if you get the Home Library Edition.

Two pictures came also (#44 & #45). They are pretty good, aren’t they? Of course they aren’t excellent photography, for both are too dark, but I’m most pleased with them. One can’t expect too much on his first experiments. If I could have them developed & printed at once, I could judge better how to set the camera; but the interval is so long between “shooting” & “seeing” that I can’t remember the settings. They mean a great deal to me, anyway, poor photography or not.
I finished another film today, but can't tell you what I've been snapping or it would give away our position. Someday, when I am free to send them to you, you will probably be able to recongnize where they were taken. I did a little sightseeing today, also, while searching the countryside for the locations of the various hospitals. This hilly country is very scenic, much better than the open, rolling country I described sometime previously. Of course, finding the hospitals is a necessity, but it is also a wonderful excuse for traipsing around the country ever so often. I'm still the old sightseer you remember me to be, always ready to go and see. I'm never too tired for that.

You know, I can't seem to write interesting letters any more. They just ramble along and get nowhere and say nothing. Maybe I'll get in the mood again and write the way I should instead of whipping out this tripe.

Love,
Son

Letter 242, 1944-09-04 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 25-26

Dear Mother & Dad,

I know now that I'm beginning to feel more like my old self. Of course I'm not saying that is a good sign, for the change might have been valuable, but I'm simply making an observation based upon the type of thinking I have been dong recently. This rear eschelon [sic] job has begun to minimize the dangers of front line warfare and as a result I've gone back to dreaming about teaching history and literature. Yes, really. Last night I lay on my cot for several hours, mulling over methods and means; and I feel I've begun to come through with a few good ideas. I've really become enthused over the topic again, and I hope to do a little work on the subject in my spare time, jotting down notes that I can later consolidate. Don't be surprised if occasionally [you] receive an envelope full of what appears to be meaningless gibberish. Those cryptic notes will be meaningful to me, if to no one else.

More and more have I begun to realize that a few of the high school teachers had some good ideas in their teaching, even if their thoughts and plans didn't materialize. I began to wonder why their teaching was not as conducive to learning as it should have been, and I believe I struck upon the basic reason. The fault lay in the person of the teacher himself. He simply wasn't enthusiastic about his subject. He was interested in the job for the money, not because he really wanted to teach that particular subject. You can't interest anyone else if you are not interested yourself. How can they inspire others if the subject doesn't inspire the teacher himself? And in these few, poorly arranged sentences lies much of the trouble in modern teaching. Not entirely, naturally, for methods and similar pedagogic paraphernalia do play a valuable part, but they are secondary to the teacher's personality. If he is interested enough to try to do the job well, he'll fuss around until he succeeds, even if he is lacking three required teaching courses for the subject.

Today and yesterday the temperature took a sudden nose dive, and thus today I've been
luxuriating in a wonderful, autumn day. It was really cold last evening and there still was enough snap at mid-morning to be invigorating. I may get to like Italy if the weather continues this sudden crisis in temperature. Almost New English in feeling.

I believe you said in a recent letter that Louis Peter’s sister was married and someone else had moved into Mock’s house. It was Louis’ sister wasn’t it? Also, I received a recent News-Times and it contained an item about Bill Mock being in the Pacific and receiving a promotion of some sort, and also about Mr. Mock’s mother dying.

I’m enclosing a couple of clippings from the Stars & Stripes. I know you like to read them ever so often.

My writing paper is still holding out well, but in my next package you might include another folder of writing materials. And just for the record, so the P.O. will permit, I’ll send a few of the usual edibles I would enjoy – crackers – cheese spreads – chicken – tuna – caramels – pickels – cocoa – etc.

No, the restrictions still hold and I can’t tell you where I am, except that I’m still in Italy. You can guess, though, can’t you? Let me know what you surmise.

I have been working practically all day on venereal disease records. We have a great deal of that, especially in a colored outfit. Either they get around more or are more susceptible, I don’t know which, but they certainly acquire all types & varieties. And this Italian stuff is mean business, so tough to knock out that the usual treatments fail very often. A great deal of penicillin is going to treat V.D. cases now, as well as for war wounds. A mighty good thing it became more readily available when it did.

Love,
Son

[two columns from Stars and Stripes and a Bill Mauldin cartoon included]

Letter 243, 1944-08-06  (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 25-26

6 August 1944 [probably 6 September]
Dear Mother & Dad,

Cold & rainy all day. And I took my camera with me today, hoping to snap some pictures! That would happen to me. However, by using the slowest speed and largest opening I may have a couple of decent shots.

Those photos of me came today and I really was disappointed, for they are so fuzzy. Not at all clear cut. Could it be the printing or are they simply out of focus? I expected that they would be much more clear than they are and probably was looking for too much from my first attempts. I won’t give that easily.

I looked for Jack Gilbert last evening but discovered that he is in a different company than I thought. His outfit is ten miles or more from here, so I’ll have to wait a bit before seeing him. Ulman should also be nearby, but he has not as yet joined his battalion. His surgeon said they had been expecting him for several days and were beginning to wonder what had happened to him, so I assured them that he would arrive shortly. (Wonderful grammar I’m using)

Of course you have read about the cities in the Levant having sections of the towns devoted exclusively to the manufacture of a particular item of merchandise. In some respects Italy has
a similar situation, the difference being that instead of a section it is an entire town that is famous for a particular product – Rome, religion – Naples, Cameos – Florence, art – I visited for a most brief glance one of these specialist’s villages today, the one that is renowned for its alabaster shops. [Volterra?]

Unfortunately it had been raining since early morning and so there were few shops open to catch the attention of the allied tourists. The little stores were not actually closed, but because of the discouraging climate, they had failed to open the doors of their places of business. A few, eager for what little trade they could entice on such an unfavorable day, were invitingly wide, but theses hustlers usually had the poorest selection of articles. We hiked the nearly deserted streets but we could scarcely even see any of the famous alabaster. A couple of British boys, however, suddenly appeared with their arms bulging with carefully wrapped parcels, the contents hidden by old Italian newspaper, and we inquired of them how to locate these secreted shops. Their reply was simple. “Just look for a door sill that is covered with white powdered alabaster, open the door, and go in. These Italians are just too lazy to open up themselves.” We tried and it worked.

The workshops and salesrooms are just small, bare rooms, covered with a fine layer of alabaster powder, so that the entire place looks as if Tom Sawyer had been busy with his white wash. A couple of crude shelves and a table may display the finished articles, while those in preparation are scattered about hit or miss. Small slabs of the white stone lie in carefully arranged piles for the workmen, who likewise are frosted with white. In some shops mama & the bambino are busy with the tedious job of giving the shaped article its fine polish, the smoothing agents being mostly polishing cloths and human muscle. Some of the workers cut their own slabs & blocks from large, unshaped masses of stone, slicing in down with a saw to the required size. The plates and bowls seem to be made from patterns that resemble pottery in process on a potter’s wheel; the other items, designed “free hand.”

I really was disappointed in their handiwork, however, and I feel that we are at fault. From looking at a few special items, I gained the feeling that as craftsmen they once were excellent, but our sudden demand for souveniers had led them to lower their standards to produce quantity. I was looking for something unique, but, as you will see when my package arrives, I failed. The sales list now is mostly little boxes, paper weights designed with the 5th Army insignia, chess men (quite nice), carved dogs, etc. all produced in assembly line technique. Ther artists will carve what you request, but only on order. I have seen some very nice heads of individuals, the likenesses taken from photographs supplied as models; animals, very delicately carved from the almost transparent and best alabaster; massive, well-designed bookends; but all on-order, none for ready sale. The milky alabaster is very soft, and I peered in at one workman, chipping away skillfully at the stone he was carving to form book ends in the shape of horses’ heads. Most of the work now is in the milky white type of material or stone slightly tinted and shaped and polished to form simple items, easily made & copied – powder & pin boxes, paper weights, ash trays. Nothing really nice. So I just bought “something”, hoping to return when I had more time to prowl & perhaps search out a shop where I could find “just the thing”. My purchases consisted simply of a bowl made of “agate” (alabaster with grayish ingredients scattered throughout), made of the almost clear, translucent material of which I saw little. Perhaps you will enjoy them. I hope so.

We had some wonderful watermelon today, the best I’ve found in Italy. Mighty tasty. How about a bite? I have one here by my side on the cot as I write.
I made a discovery about Italian art today. Take a look at the background in some of the famous Italian Renaissance paintings and note the mess of landscape detail that clutters up the picture. I knew the artists were playing about with the newly found perspective, but I thought they were playing about a little too much – trees, vineyards, orchards, villages, hills, etc. all smashed into one tiny scene. Then, today, I saw where they got the idea. In this section of Italy, most familiar to the most famous artists of the period, it is the type of scenery that confronted them every day. They simply did what all artists do – incorporated that with which they were familiar in their work. Of course this isn’t a startling discovery, for thousands undoubtedly have realized this very thing years ago. But to an individual who discovers something on his own, the discovery assumes great importance. I just had to tell you about it so you could appreciate my Columbian attitude.

Buona Sera.

Love,
Son

[Algerian and Italian currency enclosed with this letter.]
the material. If I can decide the large, general areas that should be covered and do a little thinking about them, I'll have made a long step forward. Most people, when they go into their studies do it most haphazardly (as I had done and probably will continue to do, despite all my firm resolutions), and thus I feel that if I have my own personal little plan, it will be most valuable. All I lack now are the materials with which to study and the freedom to do so.

Love,
Son

Letter 245, 1944-09-09 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 25-26

9 September 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I saw a few exhibition boxing bouts today starring Joe Louis. Yes, Sgt. Joe is over here, entertaining the boys, still with the same dead pan expression, but still able to prance about the ring. He really is a big built fellow. Nothing I'd like to tackle. I had my camera along, so one of these days you'll see what I saw – in miniature. And without the action.

Your recent mail is arriving in fine shape but the letters written during the first of August have never reached me here. Also the films and jack-knife. One of these days it will find its way into the correct mail pouch.

The tales you have been telling me about the garden really make me hungry for fresh American grown vegetables. The canned ones you have put away will do well in a pinch, however.

You spoke several weeks ago about the Combat Infantryman Badge. Yes, I know about them and even had one awarded to me. However, a war department order came out later, rescinding all such awards to medics having one. They are nice to have, but actually medals don't mean a thing except to bolster up your own ego and fool the gullible public into thinking you really are an important fellow.

My second ballot came today, so now you can be certain that at least one will be handy when voting time appears.

I'm sending you this Saturday's edition of “Stars & Stripes”. You have been asking for a long while to see one, and this copy really is fairly good. All about the 5th Army drive in Italy. You might even begin to figure out what the Italian campaign was about and at least imagine where I was when some of it was happening.

Has my discharge ever arrived yet. It should be coming along before too long now.

Will you also please change my mailing address for the overseas edition of Newsweek and Time? I'm always planning to, but never seem to get around to actually doing it.

Please send the camera case directly to Chaplain Newman for me, won't you? It will make it much easier now that I'm not always near him.

Chaplain Walter Newman
Hq. Co. 3rd Bn., 350th Inf.
A.P.O. #88
I still have my sheath knife. As for the items that disappeared from my barrack’s bag, they were just extra clothes – socks – underwear – fatigues, etc. My personal things, as far as I can figure out, were not touched, so my little individual bags, etc. are still with me.

Yes, I think you had better send me a wool, sleeveless sweater, gloves, and a scarf. I honestly can’t see, even if the war should end immediately, that we would even plan to start home before winter hits. I imagine we will be here several months more, no matter what the situation. Also please send some more thread – black & brown.

There definitely are advantages in being an officer, especially in an outfit like this. I am much more free to go off and do a bit of sightseeing, on various and sundry pretexts, with no questions asked. I certainly would have and plan to do more when the opportunity presents. I’m still hoping to get a glimpse of Siena & Pisa. Maybe soon.

I didn’t mean to give the impression that I felt badly about being assigned to a colored outfit. As a matter of fact, I am quite pleased. Everything is working out very well, and gradually I’m becoming better acquainted with all the officers. They are a fine group of fellows, most of them college graduates who became commissioned through their R.O.T.C. activities.

What is Buddy Wallin’s complete address? The particular A.P.O. #464 doesn’t help much, for it covers a great many small organizations all grouped around a larger one.

I don’t think I receive much mail until I begin to go through the letters I have saved for the last week or so, and I discover I have accumulated quite a stack.

I’ve been cleaning my pockets, and I’ve discovered a few bits of junk I’ll include now and then.

Buona sera,

Love,
Son
first class mail idea for small packages apparently is a farce. Ask the clerk at the Post Office if "first class" refers only to the transit of the package while in the states or if it covers the entire trip. I fear it may be the former.

Capt. Di Sario has joined my this evening in my letter writing. Recently domestic difficulties have begun to plague his existence, for most suddenly his wife wrote, asking for a divorce. He can't understand it, or at least he says he can't, but I presume there is more to it than reaches the eye. It undoubtedly has upset him terribly and he is becoming a nervous wreck, just waiting for developments. Since that one letter he has heard nothing. Now he is attempting to be reclassified in order to return to the states to try to clarify matters. The Captain is a most unusual personality, very difficult to understand but I manage to get along with him very well. I make it a point to do so, though I honestly don't find it at all trying. Personally, he is a hard man to classify. I don't know whether he really is a good doctor or not, but he is constantly telling everyone of all the work he has done in various lines. Then, as if realizing that he sounds as if he were trying to make an impression, he confesses that he didn't always talk & act like he now does, but army experiences and his recent troubles have warped his personality. He harps on that line too much to satisfy me. He is quite an accomplished musician, for I have heard him play a bit on the trumpet; and know he has played with the Philadelphia Symphony and also with well known dance bands. He also appears to be well read in many fields, but somehow, the conversation always swings to the field in relation to him personally – what he did – or saw – or experimented. I'm wondering if he isn't a definite case of "inferiority complex". I can't piece enough pertinent information about him beneath this cover he assumes in that regard, but I feel that probably is at the bottom of the case. I do know, however, that he has flown over from the U.S. to Naples as a member of the Typhus Commission. That probably is something to his credit in respect to his ability as a physician.

I'll still take Rome as my favorite city in Italy so far. As a city, the famed Florence is highly overrated, but it does have some wonderful artistic spots scattered around the town. The whole impression of Rome is excellent. The total impression of Florence is disappointing. As an historic spot the Ponte Vecchio undoubtedly is famous. As an artistic one it is a flop. To me it looks like nothing better than a "several span" bridge with a great many dilapidated buildings desperately clinging to its narrow thoroughfare to prevent being squeezed into the Arno. The Duomo, campanile & baptistery are delightful surprises – light, colorful, airy – in the midst of the somber dingy buildings that shut them in. Unlike St. Peters, the interior is very dull and unexciting, due somewhat to the many statues & paintings that have been removed for safekeeping; but due more so to the fact that it is not artistically or colorfully planned. Even the people seem to lack the sparkle of the Romans. They even seem surly & resentful of other humans bursting in upon them. Perhaps if I have the chance to really become acquainted with Firenze, I'll learn to appreciate it as I do Rome. Until then I'll let those words stand as my impressions at a fleeting glance.

I'm surprising myself and am finishing this letter tonight. When I begin ranting, it's hard to quiet me down.

I wrote a short note to Albert Evitts today. I said very little, but I was just in the mood to let him know I am still floating about. I would enjoy hearing from him for it is now almost two years since I last visited his home in New Milford.

11:05 (2305 in army lingo) Do you see how the army figures its time? That's a good problem in elementary arithmetic for you.
Buaona sera.

Love,
Son

Letter 247, 1944-09-11

Dear Mother & Dad,

Remember my telling you how often one city or village in Italy is famous for a particular product? Recently I have heard of a couple more spots of that nature, and I'm hoping someday to be able to visit them. I understand that a small town called Volterra is noted for its alabaster, and knowing how much you enjoy that sort of thing, I certainly shall try to buy a carving or perhaps a vase for you. Sightseeing soldiers travel from all sections of Italy to reach there to obtain a souvenir for the folks at home. Yesterday I visited one of the evacuation hospitals nearby, and several of the doctors were sporting briar pipes they had found in a factory in Siena. They are very light and beautifully well made, just the weight for you, dad, so if I possibly can I will try to get you one. I'd hate to fail this time, because so far I have been so miserably unsuccessful in locating momentos for men. Siena also has a famed cathedral, if I remember my art appreciation classes correctly, and I would enjoy that too. These hospital doctors seem to get around, for another one had some beautiful linen tablecloths (abt. $65) that he had bought in a little shop in Florence. They were very nice, but the price seemed too steep for me. Undoubtedly there are less inexpensive [sic] ones, for he also had some the size of a card table, complete with great dinner napkins, that I know cost much less. If you are interested enough and think it is worth paying $15 to $20 for something of that type, I'll do my best if I ever get there again. Let me know if you are interested, but remember, I'm not a good judge of linens.

I got myself a steel ammunition box today to keep some of my personal articles in. In an ack-ack outfit a person can travel much more completely equipped than he could if he were in the infantry. Many of the men even have these boxes, and all of them have cots.

The kitchen help in our kitchen hav the assistance of various and sundry young Italian fellows that have accumulated along the way. I understand that most of them are refugees from northern Italy or escaped members of Italian German work battalions that were broken up when Italy surrendered. They are willing to work with us, for while many of their fellow countrymen are subsisting on meager rations, they receive the best meals the kitchen puts out, have plenty of clothes, are paid by the other kitchen workers for helping them and receive free transportation toward their homes that are in the process of being liberated. They really struck a bargain.

A badly mangled box came in this evening’s mail and I feared for the contents but need not have worried. Everything was fine except for the crackers which undoubtedly now are crumbs. Contents, for your check list, crackers, sardines (in “vertical can”) chicken, tongue, nuts, sugar, fruit flavoring. Two films and a package of razor blades arrived first class. Prints still not here.
Have you noticed how much shorter the days are becoming? Tonight there is no moon and the stars are sparkling as they do at home in the fall. And no wonder, either, for the weather here has become truly autumnal, both day and night, bringing that invigorating climate that even seems to draw forth the energy in the stars. Remember my courses in astronomy when I made a practice of hanging out the dining room window, gazing up at the constellations, or trying to tell time by the position of the big dipper? Tonight is one of those nights, each star an individual light unto itself. Would that we could race up to Clapboard Ridge to watch the changing heavens or catch a glimpse of the Aurora Borealis this evening.

I previously had requisitioned some extra clothing through our supply officers and today they came sailing in. They aren’t exactly the right size, but I can easily remedy that. The shirts do not have the officers tabs on the shoulder, but that isn’t important to me. Three shirts and three pairs of trousers, plus the two sets I already have, plus two officers shirts makes a good wardrobe. I also got five sets of underwear and two belts. That is fair enough. Now I lack a blouse (which I haven’t yet decided to buy), a green shirt, and perhaps some other shirts and pants (pinks). The special service officer also is trying to get me a sleeping bag, but so far none have become available. The bed roll is furnished and mine has been in use for several weeks already. I’m really pretty well equipped.

Enough for tonight. The grapefruit juice I just drank did not settle too well and my stomach is a little upset. I’ll forget about it as soon as I crawl in bed.

Love,
Son

Letter 248, 1944-09-13

Dear Mother & Dad,

I helped develop two rolls of my film last evening and the results were very satisfactory. Lt. Fisher in A Battery has the equipment and Capt. Di Sario and I stumbled through the woods to his tent last evening and played around a bit, using up his supplies. Of course I didn’t get a good view of my shots, for the fill was still wet when I left, but those that I managed to take a peek at looked good. I even snapped some shots of our monkey, Joe, that looked as if they would print up well. I just snap away and click off the film, so keep it coming. Some even roll their own film from the bulk & make a success of it.

Coming in various envelopes you should have received by now almost 36 more individual negatives. There probably are a couple of blanks. Let me know if they came through O.K. Were any more of my letters opened by the Base Censor? Only in letters of that sort could the negatives disappear, and they really should not then for I make sure not to send anything of military value. If I take any of that sort, I’ll carry them with me and bring them home in person.

Yes, I would like to get some souveniers for the others but it is more difficult than it sounds. Naturally I could buy “something”, but that isn’t what they really want. I’m sure they want
something typical of Italy; and something decent of that sort is difficult to fund, especially at a reasonable price. I'll try though and see what I can manage.

I'm really pleased that you had to go to New York for the insignia, for it did you good to get away from home, even if only for a day. You should do that more often.

I met Joe Louis this evening, shook hands and all that sort of thing. He really is a dull sort of guy, apparently punchy, from all the boxing he has done. He has been staying with the boys of one of our batteries while putting on exhibitions in this area, and so came to the colored U.S.O. show we had at headquarters tonight. He looks terribly out of shape and is really getting fat. Even his face is chubby. They say he really can eat, and that he gets the very best of food, and stores it away three (if not more) times a day. He really is a great morale factor amongst these boys, however. They really think he is great.

In a couple of days I am leaving headquarters battery for a short time, but continue addressing my letters as before. I will be away only a few days, while Capt. Di Sario goes to the rest camp, and Capt. Parrot comes in to take his place. I'm going to the separated battery Capt. Parrot has been with. They are over a five hour ride from here, so you can see how we are spread out. I'm most pleased and eager to go, for that particular battery is near a spot I've always wished to visit. I volunteered to go and you can be sure there was a method behind my offering.

The weather has really become cold nights now. Two blankets folded double are fine as long as the cold night air doesn't slip in. It's cool enough now so that field jackets are becoming customary attire at evening and mosquitoes have begun to give up in frozen disgust.

I still have great quantities of letters to answer and tonight, while I'm in the mood, I'll try to do my duty – with V-Mails.

Love,
Son

16 September 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

This is one of those many days on which I have very little to write and as a consequence will probably fill several pages, just giving my impressions of what I have seen or others have told me.

I imagine that many of the statements I have made in respect to the Italians as a people contain many out of focus remarks caused by the current war situation. I try my best to understand these people, to look at them through unprejudiced eyes, to make allowances for the trying times under with [sic] I am observing them; but nevertheless I still have little respect for them as a group. I have met many individuals who are very fine people – intelligent, industrious, responsible. But so many more of them are lax, poorly schooled, willing to accept all that will be done for them but not willing to put forth any effort to clarify the muddled situation in which they find themselves, & anxious to complain if everything is not in their
favor. They certainly lack initiative and backbone, and seem to be so confused they can’t even begin to help themselves. As a nation, I feel they are not at all ready to assume the burden of governing themselves in a democratic manner. I fear another sawdust Caesar can easily assume control unless proper preparations are made to prevent such an unfortunate re-occurrence; they must be taught to think for themselves and stand on their own two feet.

As a country Italy is unbelievably poor and backward. You scarcely would believe such conditions could exist, calmly accepted as being the natural way of things, in what until recently was considered to be one of the major European powers. Some of the cities are very modern, excellent apartment houses, plumbing, fine shops, paved streets, sanitary improvements. In other sections they remind one of the lowliest slums in our large cities, and the slum regions predominate. The larger cities are fair, and as the size of the communities decrease, the conditions become worse, until, on reaching the little villages, they become almost unbearably dirty – the streets, the houses, the people. Not everyone, of course, but a large proportion are terribly careless in personal hygiene. A lack of soap may be provide some excuse, but water is still available. Many individuals try to care for themselves and their homes but the surrounding dust and dirt and lack of facilities often overcome their attempts – miserably. The interiors of the homes are often dark, dingy and grime laden with practically no light sneaking in through the small, ill spaced windows. The productive land is very scarce, for the steep mountain ranges that practically “are” Italy offer little arable soil and it is therefore most understandable that such conditions exist. Italy truly is not a wealthy country agriculturally and apparently not industrially.

I have just re-read the last couple of paragraphs and am most disappointed in what I have expressed. I simply jotted down thoughts as they came to me, had no scheme or system to my writings, and therefore did not do a very profitable job. Remember, these are only impressions that I have carried away and not to be relied on for accuracy. In emphasizing those items that I did, I omitted many commendable qualities of the Italians and Italy – the beautiful scenery, the pine forests, the friendliness of many, their enjoyment of music, their attempts to wrest a successful living from the ill productive soil, the interests of many in learning, their artistic heritage that many are carrying on today, the ability of the city dwellers to live well, dress well etc. if they are financially capable – all points much to their credit. No group is all good or bad, but some still have to give more ample proof of their abilities before being considered essentially “good”.

17 September 44

In one item of attire, the Europeans in general use much better judgement than we. In the summer, to counteract the intense heat, boys and men of all ages don shorts, and consequently live a life many degrees more comfortable than the heavily trousered Americans. Most understandably, business men do not wear them while working and many others are seen clothed as we normally see in the cities, but in the towns and in the country, a much higher percentage seem to favor shorts. Even the conservative British troops wear them, colonels, majors, and all, - but they are not quite as brief as those affected by the Italians. Knowing my reaction to the hot weather, you can be sure I would wear heavy, wool trousers, the very same that we wear in coldest winter. The American army tries too hard to play soldier and force its men to dress like magazine illustrations. We can’t even roll up our sleeves, in the hottest temperature, because someone, (wearing cool summer uniforms undoubtedly) feels that it would not appear proper.
Never mind how we feel as long as our appearance is good – as we collapse from the heat.

When the front moves rapidly, the towns and homes in the path of the advancing armies receive artillery poundings in proportion to their use as fighting positions. Some may be severely damaged, some be passed by untouched. However, when the front becomes static for a fairly long period, as happened along the Garigliano River before the push in May, and until recently, along the Arno, the cities and towns receive a terrific shelling until they are almost completely ruined. Someone was telling me recently about a visit he made to Pisa a few days after the long stationery line had been pushed north. The city is off limits to all civilians as well as unauthorized military personnel, and little wonder. It is one of the most completely devastated cities in Italy, with nothing but crumbled buildings, shell-pocked roads, and unpopulated districts greeting the visitor. The atmosphere is most eerie and uncomfortable for there is not a sound of life, or a sound of activity of any sort in the whole place. Not a person is seen or even a stray animal. An unearthly silence blankets the ruins. The brilliant sunshine of a warm September day adds to the confusion, for the lack of life during the usually active hours makes the contrast between a peaceful scene and a warlike one even more overwhelming. Perhaps this will give you a little clearer estimation of the destruction. Only a street or two in the southern section of the city has been cleared for traffic, the winding thoroughfare through the once populous city by which route practically all the transportation goes. All the side streets are blocked off by white, engineering tape, being made unusable by the rubble that blocks them as well as the traps the retreating Jerries left behind. The signs that mark the entrance to each street explain this well. “Molti mines and bobby traps. Don’t take the chance”. A very timely warning, knowing what inquisitive creatures and souvenir hunters we humans are.

Bishop knew I was interested in the cathedral & tower of Pisa so he made a point of telling me that they still are standing in excellent condition. In strong contrast to the ruins in most of the city, the section around the cathedral area is in fine condition, the only damage being a gaping hole in one of the walls surrounding the square and one scarcely noticeable shell hole in the famed tower. It was not quite as difficult to avoid shelling the cathedral & surrounding church buildings as in many other Italian cities, for in Pisa the church is situated in a large, grass covered square that allows it to be viewed in a fine setting, rather than being hemmed in on all sides. Many of the famed architectural gems of Italy cannot be seen at their best, for you can only get glimpses of sections of them, showing from behind surrounding buildings. To really appreciate them they should be seen in their entirety. Perhaps, because of its fortunate setting, is another reason the fame of the Pisa cathedral, baptistery, and campanile have spread.

You read in the newspapers much about the coastal defenses of France and of the Siegfried line, but don’t be under the impression that the Germans ignored Italy when they set up their defense areas either. I know you have read of the Gustav line, the Hitler line, the Gothic line, but despite the many mine fields, pill boxes, guns housed in tunnels, they primarily depended upon the mountainous terrain as their defensive medium. But the Jerries also had a long coast line to protect against possible amphibious landings, and here they did a remarkable job, similar to that done in France but on a much smaller scale. I’ve seen their set up all along the coast, but recently I had an unusually fine opportunity to get a view of their defense in depth which they had constructed. We were bivouacked along a straight road that ran at right angles to the shore, cutting directly through the defense area. Naturally, the road had
been defended, but the mines had been removed and the road-blocks of the trunks of giant pine trees had been cleared away, and this I was free to observe a cross section. I presume the shore was mined. I didn’t test to find out. Barbed wire entanglements also protected the outermost ring. Behind them were shore guns, dug well into the sand and sundry machine gun positions. Then in layers, in from the shore, were various defense lines – concrete fox holes, stone tank barriers, five foot deep communication trenches, barriers of logs set up right in the ground, various rings of barbed wire, deep emplacements constructed of logs and covered with a two feet thickness of sand, tank ditches, observation posts and snipers’ positions high in the trees. Along the road, in addition to the temporary road-blocks I mentioned previously were permanent ones that could be closed by iron girders slipping into slots in the cement bulwarks (similar in action to bars in the gates on American farms). Now do you see why the Germans make such xxx use of impressed labor battalions in their armies?

Love,
Son

[enclosed a newspaper clipping entitled “Puptent Poets” – a selection of poems written by enlisted men.]

Letter 250, 1944-09-18 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 25-26

18 September 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

If you haven’t already sent two green shirts just send one wool one. I really won’t have any use for a silk one. Officers just don’t dress that snappily over here.

You probably have read recently about the negro infantry division that is now in Italy. Don’t think it is the only colored outfit that is a combat organization, despite what the newspapers are very likely to report, for that is not the case. The 450th is also considered to be in combat, even though it is in the rear, and some of the men really are up there where the shells are falling. I have read various articles wondering how colored boys would react to combat, but those doubting authors need not have worried. They behave just as well, if not better, than some of our white troops and really are making a name for themselves. They are not to be ashamed of.

Have you read Walter Lippman’s “U.S. Foreign Policy”? A condensation of it was published in the Reader’s Digest almost a year ago, but I am just getting around to reading the complete book now. Be sure you do the same. It is the most clear, concise report of past & future foreign policy I have yet seen, and is one of the most timely books that I have seen in a long time. I really hope you will take my advice and read it carefully; then, give me your opinion of his ideas.

You are saving the book review sections of the Sunday papers and the Life magazines aren’t you? I really will enjoy getting my hands on that stack that must be accumulating – in the attic I presume.

Off and on I have been enclosing clippings from Stars & Stripes. Many of them, I know, will mean nothing to you, but they are items that I want to save, glance at them and put them
away.

I began “Jamaica Inn” yesterday but have only read a bit. By no means is it a great novel, but it is never the less interesting enough for me to want to finish it.

I haven’t heard from Martha in a long while, only two short notes, that I can remember, since she was married. I haven’t written her many, either, but only because her letters were not arriving. Selfish as it may sound, I don’t like to write if I don’t receive any answers, for receiving letters means a great deal over here, and I don’t like to waste my time on output that brings no return.

Have any more of my letters been opened by the base censor since that sudden spree?

Love,
Son

Letter 251, 1944-09-20 (back to Table of Contents)

Dear Mother & Dad,

Somehow I have acquired a bothersome head and chest cold, that began with a sore throat that soon disappeared. I have been feeding myself on grapefruit juice, (left from the battery P.X.) in expectation from relief in that manner, and gradually it is helping clear up my troubles. Several of us have been the victims of this kind, and I am all for putting the blame on the luxurious life we are leading. Not that I want to give up this soft living. Far from it. May it go on for the duration. Let me give you a glimpse of this “hard life” – (which probably will last about two days and then we’ll return to foxholes and tents)

Previously I have usually written only of the crowded cities, interesting but filthy little towns and villages and isolated farm houses. Seldom about the modern towns. Recently we reached some of the seaside resorts which the Italian guide book I found describes as “è un’elegante città moderna”, and truly they are. All the houses and hotels are of most recent construction, their cement fronts tinted in light colors, and the interiors of fine woods, tiles and marble. They were built for the wealthy Italians and the visiting Americans who would throw their money about, and in peace times undoubtedly were also finely furnished. Most of the moveable decorations have been carried away as the war swept through, but those private homes and alberghi [hotels] that are still standing and have a few pieces of furniture left, give good evidence of the life of ease these buildings once witnessed. I imagine the Germans made full use of them while these sections of Italy were so long under their control, and probably much of the equipment has found a place in some German household. Many of their strong points were built along the shores and adjoining the sea view hotels, or, in between the individual homes. While not manning the positions, they lived in the homes. These Jerries certainly know how to fight a war with as much comfort as possible. In order that some of the fortified positions could be more easily camouflaged, they erected them in the shape of buildings, painted on windows and doors and added the sign “Ristoranti” to complete the illusion. Even close by the deception would scarcely be noticed.
The battery I am with temporarily has moved into a group of homes of the type I have been describing and is relaxing in luxury. Let me tell you just a bit about it. The caretaker of the modern three storied house I am in is still on the grounds, and thus all is in the best possible condition. Each floor is a complete apartment, and thus each has its bedrooms, kitchen, dining room and bath. Each officer has his own room, and because fortunately the furniture was left here, each one has his own bed. The mattress is missing but the springs have a wonderful bounce. Each level also has its sun porch, ours, on the top, being most expensive. The one on the roof is apparently for anyone in the building. The floors are all of tile of various colors and designs, the ceilings twelve to fourteen feet high, the walls painted. The Italians like furniture of modern design and the entire house is thus furnished. It is not of the extreme angular type but nevertheless is of the large, showy, veneered type that I do not like because it lacks the simplicity that such furnishings should have. It makes a good initial appearance but I would soon tire of it in my home. The windows reach from the floor to the ceiling and they have some qualities that I would incorporate into a home of my own. The glass does not reach the entire length of the window-door, despite the fact that it is more of a window than a door, though practically every one can be used for either purpose. The blinds on each window are similar to Venetian blinds, but are of much more sturdy construction & are on the outside. They can be so arranged that light comes in between the slats or so each one closes tightly upon the next, but not in the manner of those blinds we are familiar with. These simply slip closer together rather than operate on the “hinge” system. (Pestalozza of Turin is the manufacturer, or was, perhaps I should say)

One more note on our luxurious life. Electricity from the battery generator has been wired into the chandelier of the table in the second floor dining room, and so, at night, we can eat by electric light in style, and afterward enjoy the same light for reading and writing or simply talking.

I mentioned the guide book I had found. In addition I also picked up some illustrated magazines of the Italian provinces, wonderfully clear photographs adding to the text. If I can, I am going to locate a few more that should be there. They are worth sending home, especially since they are of some of the sections I have visited, so one of these days I’ll get them off in the mail.

Since I have been away from headquarters, Buddy Wallin has been trying to get in touch with me. He went to the 88th only to discover that I had left, but sent me a note by messenger that he would like to see me. One of the 450th boys brought it to headquarters and it was forwarded to me here. However, the catch is, I don’t know what outfit Buddy is in or the name of the fellow that brought the note. I hope you have already sent me his address as I asked, for I certainly do want to see him.

I had a glimpse recently of the mountain ranges that are part of the Gothic line and can thus well understand the difficulties along the front. They are very high, very beautiful but present terrific fighting difficulties. At the time, some of the peaks were in the clouds, and I was only seeing the “footbills”.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

I just received your letters of the 10th and am surprised into replying immediately. You spoke vaguely about a newspaper item about my commission, about so many speaking about it and such. Of course I have no idea what the paper reported, but by the tone of your letter it sounds as if they have been spreading some whoppers, almost like this hero stuff you hear about. I'm not saying this from modesty but I really mean what I say. I have never done anything that deserves credit along that line. I haven't any expectation of doing so in the future. My promotion came because I worked hard while others were too indifferent or lazy, because I stayed awake and worked when others slept, because I picked up smatterings of medical knowledge that are important in emergency work, because I worked with the medical records in the aid station and thus had a fairly prominent if not necessarily important position in the battalion, because I made it a point to try to be friendly with all I came in contact, and most important of all, because Capt. Stratman and Capt. Singmaster were indulgent enough to write a convincing letter saying that they felt I deserved a commission. Truthfully, that is what there is to it. If the item gave any other impression, it is wrong and I wish it to be corrected without undue fuss. I'm not one of those persons who dashes about regardless of shells and bullets, urging the men on, showing how courageous I am. I'm too frightened for that. The whistle of shells petrify me, almost, and I lie low whenever I can. Any of the line company men, aid men and litter bearers did much more heroic deeds than I even contemplated. I didn't want to go them, let alone make a move to do so. I simply was fortunate enough to be in position similar to that which an MAC [Medical Administrative Corps] officer was expected to occupy and had very thoughtful officers who wanted to keep me with them doing the same jobs but wearing bars. now you see why I didn't want any account in the papers, because whoever is responsible for such reports writes such drivel and exaggerations that some such result can be expected. I know you couldn't help letting the Danbury papers printing such stuff, but you can help if you will let grandma, Martha, Mrs. Morris, Barbara, Divy, Phebe, Aunt Onie etc. know how I feel about all this. I just don't like that publicity, especially of that type.

I saw Buddy Wallin yesterday and we had quite a talk. It certainly was nice to see him. He looks well and is apparently enjoying his work as much as possible, for it is the type of mechanical work he was studying. He had some pictures of Martin & Olive as well as Martha & her baby (a cute little girl if ever I saw one). He is in an outfit that services our AA and thus is not many miles from here. I dropped in on him unexpectedly in the afternoon, but only had time to say “hello” when the ones I was with had to leave. I'm planning to look him up again. Tell Olive that I saw him & he is fine.

What is the name of the roller bearing company in Danbury? I was telling someone about it and couldn't remember the name.

I went to town this evening, planning to go to the theater, but, as luck would have it, the electricity went off and no movies were to be seen. We wandered a bit, sightseeing in the dark, imagining what the place was like in the middle ages when no electric lights at all were available, tried the Officers Red Cross with no more success and finally returned to camp.
early. As a result this letter will get off first thing in the morning.

Remember all the places I wanted to visit in this part of Italy? I'm afraid I'm not being very successful as a traveler, for I still have not made it to Siena. Perhaps some day I'll be able to see all I planned, but not right now. I just can't manage the transportation.

Bishop is now at the officers' rest area so I have the tent to myself. Remember the trip of Bishop's I told you about? Well, he isn't the only one that gets around even though he has more excuses, being the personnel officer, than I. I manage, now and then, to get off to some of the other battery areas, too, and see some of the sights along the way.

Another package arrived – caramels melted, crackers crushed, but otherwise fine. The jackknife also came as well as the package of snap shots. I don't want to complain about the printing, but some of them are too dark. I wish he would be a little more careful so they would show up nicer.

The AAA is not part of a division, but is a Fifth Army battalion, and therefore is not directly commanded by a general. It is one of the numerous independent organizations that are used whenever necessity demands and is not an integral part of a larger outfit as an infantry battalion is in a division. Our shoulder patches are something like this:

[Drawing of 5th army patch with colors written in]

Undoubtedly you have seen them in photographs taken in Italy.

For the time being Seth should also be located somewhere in our general area for his outfit also is a Fifth Army affair. However, as yet he has not joined his organization, apparently still having trouble with his ankle. When he does reach it we will be near enough so that we can contact each other every day if we wish—by vehicle of course. We could walk, as a matter of fact, but it would be 4 or 5 miles.

Now that you have sent them, two green shirts will be OK. They are only used occasionally, for dress purposes, but that will mean I can dress up a little more often than the others.

When you were trying to guess our seaside location you were in the general area but not the exact spot. Of course, since then, we have moved about a bit.

You never tell me what you are doing about your teeth. No avoiding the subject, are you? Egad! Miss Crosby assistant principal! Now anything can happen.

Buona sera.

Love,

Son

I've been looking over the photographs again and am more pleased with the second look. They really are well done. Complaints withdrawn.


Letter 252, 1944-09-27 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 25-26

27 September 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

When coming back to our area in the ambulance yesterday afternoon, I passes a sign reading Co A 51 Sig Bn just a few hundred yards up the narrow dusty road that we use as
a short cut to the Clearing Company. At last, I thought, I’ve caught up with him; so in the
evening I set out on the strenuous five minute stroll to that section. Sure enough. There,
shoveling down his food was Jack Gilbert. He walked back down the road to my tent, for I had
already made plans to go out that evening to develop pictures, and wanted to be available,
then we sat & talked for about an hour – and ate the melted caramels that had come in a
recent package. He is coming over again tonight and perhaps we will go to the show if there
is one nearby. He looks fine. It certainly was nice to see him again. If things continue as they
are now, we should stay fairly near each other – at least with the distance of a short jeep ride.
Oh yes, I did see a snap of Martha & Mort after the wedding, the first I have been able to get
a hold of – very, very nice.

The last two packages have arrived in poor condition, the first trouble since coming over-
seas. That probably was due to the fact that after reaching the 88th they had to catch me here,
and in transit were jumped on, thrown in the Arno, and half melted in a furnace. Most of the
contents were good just the crackers & candies not arriving too well.

Don’t be afraid to send me more film when you can get it. I might be able to wind the bulk
myself. Also, buy me a little developer & hypo so that if I use some of the others supplies I can
replace it. I know they don’t want money but instead the supplies. Money is easy to get but
not the developing materials. Developer is D – 76 or DK20. I don’t know which. Also I need
the fixative.

Capt. DiSalvo is to be returned to the U.S., for duty there, so soon some changes are to be
made. Exactly what I don’t know. He still has not heard a thing from his wife, and thus hopes
to clarify matters by seeing what’s what himself.

I’m reading “Jane Eyre” now in my spare time. It is really well written, one of the best I
have found in a long time. I know you would enjoy it.

From now on, don’t send the prints to me in packages, but just slip one or two in your
letters. Also only send one copy unless I request otherwise, for many that I am sending now
will be interesting only to me.

I’m enclosing two moon light shots just to see how they will print. They are the first of
that type I have ever tried. Also two shots of yours truly on the beach.

Love,
Son

[three photos enclosed]
He gave me his phone number and I’m planning to call tomorrow evening and ask him to stay here with me. I have no idea what his intentions are but I think anything will work out. I’m disgusted that I didn’t say all that I now think of, but that will come another time.

Jack hasn’t come over this evening. Probably his work held him up or the sprinkles & showers scared him away. Tomorrow undoubtedly he will be about.

Love,
Son

[Newspaper clipping enclosed. Headline: “Men Move Slowly on Forgotten Front”. There’s a handwritten note by TW. Just to show you what a queer war this is in Italy. The mountains get all the headlines but men still are getting killed in ___ coastal regions the newspapers never mention.]

Letter 254, 1944-09-30

Dear Mother and Dad,

The mail has been extremely poor for the last several weeks, coming only in jumps and spurts. I really lose track of much that you are trying to tell me, for the letters arrive so irregularly that often a week elapses between the arrival of a letter which you wrote on one day and that which you wrote on the next. This week I have received only about four letters – and that is the total of letters from everyone. Everyone, however, seems to be having the same difficulty as I – if that is any consolation.

In your letters to me you don’t have to hint around about what you want to say. No one ever reads your letters, so be as free as you wish. If you think I am at *********, well, say so. I’ll be the only one who reads what you say. There are now censors for mail coming from your direction.

Ulman hasn’t joined his outfit, for apparently the ankle hasn’t healed yet. He is located nearby, or at least his organization is, but I haven’t heard from him. I’ve been hoping to do some sightseeing with him, for we both enjoy many of the same things.

I’ll be looking forward to receiving the mittens and other winter clothing, for I know that by the time the package arrives I’ll have good use for them. The weather has already turned cool, cold at night, windy during the day. This time of year makes me most homesick, for I think New England in the autumn is my favorite place and season. We are beginning to get a touch of it here, cool winds, dry leaves rustling, grey scudding clouds, the stubble of cut corn field, ripe grapes – but there is too much missing to make it satisfactory.

Has the cameo the chaplain bought in Naples come yet? I just wondered if that it the one you were showing Pauline.

I’m enclosing some snapshots Lt. Hobbie took which I thought you might enjoy seeing.

I think the greatest traffic hazard in Italy is not to be laid on the shoulders of the army, but on the Italian civilians themselves. They certainly aren’t used to crowded highways, for hundreds of them peddle casually along on their bicycles as if they were the only humans within miles. Honking horns have no effect on them. They don’t waver a bit from the path they are following, be it the middle of the road on the wrong side. And those travelling hay
mows (women with enormous piles of dried grass on their heads or somehow fastened to their anatomies [sketch]) wagons struggling along pulled by oxen like creatures, carriages – all the modern conveniences.

I had a wonderful afternoon and evening yesterday. Jim Gallagher was in town on official business, and came out to the area and picked me up – in the general's car. Egad! What comfortable riding. He had to visit another city a good number of miles from this one, so naturally I went along, to see the scenery and to spend as much time with Jim as I could. I fear we didn't see much scenery, for we talked continuously both coming & going. Several times we forgot to tell the driver to take the right turn and had to retrace our route several miles, so engrossed were we in conversation. In the evening we went to the hotel for dinner – chicken (roasted), potatoes, peas, salad, coffee, rolls, butter, dessert – and dinner music – table cloths, electric lights – and wonderful service. And to think that not too many miles away the artillery is booming and the infantry is fighting in the Gothic line.

One little sidelight. The general's car naturally has the insignia placed on the front & rear (two stars on a brilliant red background, but when he is not in the vehicle it is covered. Still everyone knows it is a general's car – and therefore gapes and gawks to see who is passing by. Jim, I suppose, is used to it by now, but I still am surprised by a throng of inquiring faces all peering in my direction. Wouldn't they be surprised if they knew who I really am.

I'm spending the evening in tonight, writing this note, listening to the radio, and reading. The radio is in fine condition tonight and some of the best programs are pouring in.

I went to the movies a couple of nights ago with Jack Gilbert and really has a fine time. We sat, or rather lay in the front “row” (on the ground under a cover of protecting canvas), watching the show. It was surprisingly good – shorts, and all.

Capt. Di Salvo is leaving tomorrow and Capt. Parrett is coming down to take his place. Parrett doesn't want to come, for he doesn't get along too well with some in headquarters, but it is a matter of orders. He is expecting that he won't be here too long either, so I don't know what to expect. I'm wishing I could manage to get Capt. Singmaster as battalion surgeon, but I don't see exactly how that can be managed. I'll try though.

The melted candy is good though sticky. I just discovered the sugar coated almonds and am gorging myself with them – mighty fine, mighty fine. You can still continue to send food, especially with the approaching cold weather whetting my appetite, I can always use it. – candies, chicken, tuna, sandwich spread, cheese spread etc. You do the choosing.

Love,
Son

October, 1944
Letter 255, 1944-10-03 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 27

3 October 1944

Dear Mother and Dad,

Yesterday the air letters which you wrote on September 7th & 8th finally reached me. Now
you can get some idea of how the mail situation is here now. What brought on the sudden change is difficult to say, but it nevertheless is here.

I changed my pay deductions before anything was taken out and so now will send you my pay as I receive it minus what I want to spend here. Only $6.66 monthly will be taken out for insurance. You can use the rest as you wish; bank it, spend it, or buy bonds – whatever seems advisable to you. You were not quite correct in computing my pay, for I do receive more than you thought. $150.00 (base pay), $15 (overseas pay) and $1.00 (subsistence). Total $186.00. Out of that comes my insurance and $.75 per day for rations.

The sweater should be regulation color. Don’t worry about the shirts, I’m sure they will be all right. Tomorrow I'm planning to go to the P.X. warehouse and buy a few more clothes – a blouse (I don't want one, but fear that someday I will need one in a hurry) a pair of pink trousers, a dress shirt, and a sleeping bag (if I can get one). That will be plenty unless something special catches my eye. I don't think it will, for that will cost me enough for one time.

Tomorrow morning I think that I also will go shopping for a few souveniers in town. It is terribly hard to find anything decent, however, at a fair price. I'll try to find something for Isabel and Sumner and Hattie & Frank and some others also but have no idea of how successful I will be.

Jack was in for a few minutes last evening and asked me to go to the show, but I pleaded off because of a headache. Capt. DiSario left without doing the monthly sanitary report and I had been busy all day on that plus my own monthly reports and was really tired.

No, I don’t think Jim Warburton is up in this area. I think he probably is still in Naples and was only visiting the Rome region.

Well, I finally received that fabulous news item about my appointment and wish to heavens it had never reached the newspapers. I really mean that. Things in writing sound so different from the way they actually happen. If you knew the army system, you would realize that when such accounts are written they are made to sound much more “daring” than was actually the case, and also leave out of the picture others who were on hand also, doing just as important or even more important duties. You have to use adjectives and superlatives just to impress the “higher ups”. According to that account you would think I was handling the medical affairs for the whole division, while I really was doing very little. The bases for some of the statements are correct, but the whole thing as written sounds highly exaggerated. I'll tell you the true story one of these days. I hope you will tell the others how I feel, for I don’t want them to imagine me any way else than I am. And that picture! Egad. My high school graduation picture—seven years old. And you mean the newspaper never even called to ask about putting that slush in the paper? I'd like to get a hold of somebody and tell him off properly.

One of your V-mails said you took Jim to New York so I presume that at last he has had a furlough. I won't ask any more about him now, for I know you have written about him in some of the many letters I have not yet received. I’m certainly pleased you went to New York with him. You should do that more often.

Still no answer about the teeth.

I'm planning to try making some prints of most of my pictures before sending them home. Lt. Fort has the materials and asked me to use them with him and Lt. Hobbie. In that way I'll be able to see myself how the shots show up.

Clear and warm again today. Probably rain again tomorrow. That's the weather. The
weather here seems to be in the late fall. Not at all like the wonderful autumn days at home.

Jim is also thinking very seriously about studying for a year immediately getting out of the army. Personally I feel that will be the best time, good as a refresher and also will not interrupt any teaching job I might have.

Love,
Son
located in. Fortunately some of us have been issued “shoe packs” (shoes made of rubber about to ankle height and then leather halfway up the leg). My feet slide about in mine as if the shoes were two sizes too large, but perhaps that is because I do not have the very thick wool socks you are expected to wear in cold weather. They are sloppy but at least my feet keep dry, which is more than can be said of similar rainy days in Italy last winter. I even wear these bulky things in town, for even though there is no need for them there, I need them to reach the jeep to go to town.

Every time I get to the P.X. for a sleeping bag they have just sold the last one. I guess I’ll plan to make my own by using those large blanket pins (?) I have and wrapping shelter halves around the outside. It will do the job even though it won’t look as nice. Maybe I’ll sneak up on one yet.

I’ve been souveniering again. And this time I can’t figure how to package the blasted thing. I found a very nice 17th or 18th century, Italian brass tray (round), about 18 inches in diameter, in an antique shop in town and picked it up at what I consider to be a bargain. Now the problem is how to get it home. I’ll manage though. Some day, in a couple of months, it will arrive all properly addressed and stamped and then it is your problem. I really think you will like it, however, for it has a fine finish and is very nicely designed. When I build my house I know where I will use it, for it can be very decorative.

You can be thankful that I didn’t buy a 24 inch high statue as Goodson did. It is a fine copy of Michangelo’s “David”, but where it could fit into our home I can’t imagine. I was tempted to buy a small carved head, and may do so yet. I did get a very small terra cotta modeled head of Etruscan origin, dug up in some of the excavations around this region – very ancient and simple.

Next purchases. Three copies of paintings of some little known artists. They all are portraits, nothing elaborate and simply mounted, but I took a liking to them and so dug into my wallet again – but not for much.

I also bought a few gaudy mosaic pins that are typical of work done in this region. I do not care for them especially, but I thought Hattie and Isable might like one each. The others you can do with as you like – keep them or give them to Mrs. Morris, Grandma, Margaretha, Martha – anyone who might like them. I found two mosaics mounted on bone, use unknown, but quite attractive, for you.

The stores will be open again tomorrow, so I may have some more purchases to tell you about soon.

In regard to the brass platter, that is for you to use, but if ever I have a home of my own I may snitch it away. Don’t put it away in paper on some dusty shelf, now, just because I said that. I want you to use it, now, in whatever way you wish.

I’ve been thinking lately how our house could be redecorated and rearranged without too much trouble. See what you think. I know you won’t like some of the ideas. Why not try it, anyway. One room at a time. Living room first. Take out the library table. Yes, I know you like it, but you must admit it is “out of style”. Have you done that? Now, move the davenport over where the table was. Egad, maybe it won’t fit. Now bring the old table from the dining room and put it where the davenport was. Move the chair to the set into the corner and leave the lamp there and the banjo clock. Take down the picture that was over the davenport and throw it out the window. Take one of the “heads” I am sending home, hang it over the table, put the brass platter on the table, and perhaps a table lamp. The Victrola will also disappear 281
to the attic in the general change about, along with the lamp heretofore set thereon. The candlesticks and clock on the mantle will also go, to be replaced by the Foo dogs flanking a white container of ivy. [illustration] The picture on the wall will also go the way of the other pictures. If you think there should be another picture to take its place, let me know and I will give you more of my professional advice. The end table will also accompany the davenport on its travels. The radio will stay "set" as well as the gold chair. Picture above radio also will disappear. No suggestions as to what kind should take its place. The couch in the bay window to remain, augmented by a coffee table. The collapsing magazine rack will also disappear. Of course these suggestions are tentative. It all depends upon how it looks. Instead of the Foo dogs glass candlesticks with prisms would be fine, with white candles. The picture above the mantle should be large, not small like the one now there. If I see something here that would look nice I'll buy it. Of course, repainting and papering would be great. Have you done anything yet about recovering the furniture. You may think I am joking but I really mean this. I wish you would try it.

The dining room is a problem I hate to think of attacking. That will come at another time.

Love,

Son

I'm enclosing a couple of negatives
1. T.A.W. in person
2. 2 shots of yours truly in a fox hole

[Several Mauldin cartoons enclosed along with several clipped columns from S & S. Especially noteworthy is the story on the 349th Inf of the 88th Division.]

Letter 258, 1944-10-08 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 27

Dear Mother & Dad,

This is letter number two today. I thought of a few more things I want to say. Don't worry about Christmas gifts for me. The packages of food & clothes already on their way will be great. It is foolish to try to send much over here.

I'm pleased that the cameo has arrived. Don't mount it if you think it is too expensive, for there will be plenty of time later for that. Yes, the little cameo is made of coral.

That is perfectly O.K. concerning Beard's History. I feared you would be unable to send it first class, but hoped you might be able to slip it through.

I spent last evening developing films with Lt. Hobbie. I have some fine shots of Pisa & Florence that will enlarge very well – sharp & clear cut. Really very nice, if I do say so myself.

Air mail, 14th Sept. came this evening. Pretty poor service. Something is holding all the mail up.

Yes, we stay pretty much to the rear, well out of shell fire. An occasional plane may come over, but they are far & few today. Occasionally I go up near the front when one of our batteries is in that area, but not often. It has been a good long time since I have been in the range of small arms fire, thank heaven.

8 October 1944

282
Dad, about the time you wrote (14th Sept.) guessing my location, I was in the region you surmised, but since then have moved a good distance from there. Don't tell me you let mother censor your letters. I wouldn't stand for that if I were you.

Now that you have explained about the thickness of the wool shirts I'm glad you sent the thinner ones for that is the kind I want. I don't need any more than you have already sent.

Also enclosing two more negatives. The very faint one is me, in a foxhole. The other simply is a scene in an Italian dooryard.

Love,
Son

[Two Mauldin cartoons enclosed]

Letter 259, 1944-10-10 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 27

10 October 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Your letter of September 20th came today. Slowly but slowly I'm getting my mail. You guessed that I was at Cecina some time before you wrote. Well, you hit the nail on the head, but since then we have moved several times. I also have visited the other town you mentioned, but only for a glance.

I wrapped some packages today and will get them off tomorrow. Keep this letter and check them off when they come.

I) Box 1 (1) Alabaster vase (2) two small leaf shaped plates (3) mosaic pins (5?) and 2 on bone (4) a small doily of lace (5) An Etruscan statue – head (6) a Roman Lamp (7) several guide books & postcards

II) Box 2 (1) Large touristic pictorial guides of Italy – box filled tight

III) Wooden box (1) 18 in. brass platter (2) 2 more blue pictorial books in same series as II

IV) Rolled package – 2 old maps of America

V) Large flat package – (1) 3 reproductions of heads from famous paintings (2) 1 print of a scene in Florence

How is that for a lot of junk? There probably will be some items there you will like. If I go to town tomorrow I may find a couple of other items to send later.

I'll be looking for those packages you have on the way. However, they probably will get here in the middle of January and I'll have my Christmas then, just as I did last year.

When you send me addresses of fellows over here be sure to include their A.P.O. numbers. You never do that, and it is really important to have that information. The address is not complete without it, for these outfits can be anywhere in the European theater. If I know the A.P.O., it often is much easier to look them up personally, for I can usually locate the general area in which they are situated by that means. Send me Don Gilbert's, Francis Austin's, and Richard Rice's addresses (complete) please. If you do that, I think that very shortly I will be in a position to look them up.

The mud is still ankle deep around here, but right now that rain has stopped for a few minutes. It probably will begin again before I finish this letter.
Ulman still has not joined his outfit. I stopped in there yesterday and they can't imagine what has happened to him. I'm sure I don't know, except that he has a badly contused ankle from a jeep accident. It wasn't serious enough though, I thought. I do want to see him again before I leave here, for we had such good times together back in the 350th.

Yes, the rain has begun again. I can hear it tapping on the tent now.

Love,
Son

Letter 260, 1944-10-13 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 27

13 October 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I have only a few minutes to write this morning, but I want to enclose a money order for $150.00 and get it off at once.

I heard from Phebe yesterday with a brief mention of Jim's visit. I still haven't received your letters telling about his furlough.

Be sure to send me Francis Austion's complete address for I expect to have time to look him up in a little while. Also Richard Rice's & Don Gilbert's.

Saw Bud Wallin for a few minutes yesterday when he was in town.

Love,
Son

Letter 261, 1944-10-16 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 27

16 October 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Another package edged its way into our mail bag a couple of days ago and so we are eating extras again. Mustard, meat dressing, crackers, tuna, chocolates, potted ham, tongue. Send another package similar to that, won't you? Be sure to include some mustard, tongue and cheese spreads. Those small whole tunas you have been sending are wonderful.

I stopped in at the hospital Saturday and visited with Ulman. He is getting along fine, but his foot is so tender that he cannot bear weight on it. Nothing is broken – just badly contused. He wanders about on crutches, feels fine, but is most anxious to join his outfit. He fears they will disown him shortly and then he will be looking for a new job. I know I won't be seeing him again for a good long time so I wanted to be able to say one last good-bye.

After the war I would like to see a really good movie made of the war in Italy, but not with much concentration on actual battle scenes. A really great show could be made showing typical happenings of the small group as it progressed up the Italian peninsula – the types of

October 22, 1944

I began this note in Italy, but since then we have had a bit of a sea voyage and are now located in southern France. Yes, as quick as that, and no more Italian mountains & mud to contend with. Instead we have French mud & rain. Our arrival was typical of similar arrivals in new theaters – debarkation, no transportation, a long night hike through the mud & rain and stageless barren staging area; and a feeling of loss & lonesomeness. It doesn’t take long to get acclimated, however, so today, with a bright sun shining, we are beginning to feel at home again.

We do not as yet have our new mailing address, and so write as usual. As soon as we can find what our final location and job will be, I’ll get the information off to you. Any mail you write will be directed to us, so keep that pen working. Naturally the mail you have written up until now is being dragged back & forth across Europe somewhere, but I am sure that before too long a time the postal authorities will locate us in self defense.

The General Hosp. Francis Austin was in in Oran is somewhere in this vicinity. If we remain here long enough I’ll try to look him up. I seem to remember, however, that you said something about Francis now being in a Field Hosp. Is that true?

I’m in a tent (pyramidal) with three other officers now, rather than with Mr. Bishop. This move gave me a good chance to make the break. He is a nice enough fellow, and was very kind in taking me in when I first arrived, but has some peculiarities that make him quite disliked. He is very self centered and looks out for Bishop before anything else, too, he keeps too much to himself without mixing with the other officers in the battery. I like the others and like to be with them and go off and join in some of their activities. Naturally, if I am off living in another part of the area, they are not likely to look me up. As it now is, I can join with them & also see Bishop in some of his activities. In the tent now are (1) Lt. Goodson, commander of Hq. Btry. (2) Capt. Stinson, S-4 (Supply Officer). Goodson is very interested in art, studied it in college, and does some very nice painting himself.

October 23

Note the new A.P.O. number – 21. We just received official permission to use it. The mail written to that address will be forwarded.

Mail has already reached us here in France, as you see, there should be very little delay in
the mail already on its way to Italy. Nineteen letters this evening – 13 from you and the others scattered.

Don’t worry about a sleeping bag. Capt. Stinson got a wonderful one for me, a regular government issue for officers, filled with eider down. It is most warm. I don’t even use an extra blanket over me, despite the fact that nights are really getting cold now.

I can’t remember whether or not I have written that the knife, & package of prints arrived. They have. As did a few more pictures in the mass of letters that came this evening. Those latest ones were taken on my camera and I fear they are not too good. The negatives looked fine, however. I know that some I took in Florence and Pisa are really clear, so perhaps I have mastered the difficulties. Could some of the trouble be in the printing.

My camera has the lens in the center, but the case you sent has the bulge slightly to one side [sketch]. However, it fits my camera, and I know it does the chaplain’s, so you can send him one like mine.

If my discharge papers have not arrived yet they probably never will come. Perhaps the censors would not let them pass because they gave information concerning where I had seen service. That seems very foolish, however, for similar information had been published in the newspapers so I didn’t feel [sic] that it was not correct to send them to you. I certainly will be sorry if they are mislaid, for I really want them.

We have our generator in operation again so at last we have electric lights in the tent. Perhaps you will hear from me a little more regularly now that I don’t go to bed as soon as it becomes dark.

I’ll reread my letters in the morning and answer some of the questions you were asking in them.

Love,
Son

Letter 262, 1944-10-24

Dear Mother & Dad,

Don’t let anyone persuade you that southern France is a vacation land for winter tourists. Don’t you believe it, for it is really cold & rainy. Real winter like weather, but not really freezing. The wind is biting today and really flaps the tents about, especially because the hard ground broke most of the tent pegs when the boys tried to drive them in and so now many of them are missing.

I’m enclosing a Fifth Army insignia so you can see the patch I wore for a few weeks on my shoulder. What one we should be wearing now I have no idea.

I’m reading through your letters again and will try to answer some of your queries as I come across them. These probably will bring about a yes, no, type of letter, but perhaps it will clarify a few of the matters you have been asking about anyway.

Do try to get a copy of those pictures taken in Louisiana. I remember well when they were taken but never could discover what became of the negatives. I knew Pentin quite well for
he was in the same battalion I was in and would occasionally bring me some copies of the Danbury papers he received.

I hope those colds you have been telling me about are gone by now. I've been quite fortunate in that regard so far.

I sent another money order on the 12th of October for $150. I know you received the $100 sent Sept. 10, but how about that of August 23rd. No, don't bother to put the money orders away. Simply cash them and put them to my account. You are not down as a dependent for it asks only about total dependency. It won't matter much anyway, for I imagine all that point business will have little effect in discharge by the time I have a chance to leave the army. In fact, I don't think many will be released anyway, for, when you read the provisions carefully you discover so many ifs and buts that my feeling is that it is only a bit of propaganda to placate the wives and families of men in the service by making them think that something is being done about releasing those with much service. Undoubtedly such men will be called essential & not sent home.

I'm certainly pleased that Jim finally received his furlough and come to see you, Danbury is almost like home to him, anyway, so I can well understand why he came there. I haven't heard from him yet but I imagine that before too long I shall.

When you say “division” in regard to the 450th you are far from correct. We are simply an independent battalion. I can well understand your misunderstanding, however, for even those in the army have difficulty in keeping up with the set up. I assure you that I had no idea what the AAA organization was like until I joined it and neither did anyone else I asked. An entire division is usually used in reference to an infantry or armored division – or paratroop – or airborne. Many of the other outfits are organized as smaller units and put wherever they are needed, just as a division is. Some are regiments, some battalions, some brigades (or they used to be. Some infantry battalions even are not actually part of a division, but only attached to it. There is no logical explanation to the arrangement. It has grown of necessity, and changes constantly. We are to be a trucking company but still will be called AA.

I already have one of the officer’s rain coats you spoke about. It is the coat with the lining that I wrote about from Cecina. However, the other evening’s hike covered it with mud that has left a red stain wherever there was a glob of mud. I think that eventually those marks will wear & wash off, for it really is a fine coat that would be great in civilian life and I want to be optimistic about its future condition.

What kind of outfit is George in?

No, I don’t drive a jeep myself but have a regular driver who is assigned to the vehicle.

Love,
Son
My memory is always stimulated by odors, and today I was reminded of the days you polished the stove and then lighted a fire shortly after. At last we have acquired a stove for the aid station and the burning newness made me think of home. Trying to find enough fuel for two stoves (for we have one in our tent also) is a real problem in this barren wind swept hill we are on, for the only woods available are short bushes sparsely scattered over the fields. We have no worry about the fire drawing, for the winds are so strong & persistent that the flames are almost pulled up the stove pipe. One tent went down last evening and ours barely stood against the force that bellowed the walls in and out and continually rattled the metal cap over the peak of the roof. The sun and clear skies, however, are the sustaining influences, for I am glad to report that the rain has ceased for a few days.

When I first joined the 450th I told you that at last I was in the rear. But now we are in the rear echelon of rear echelons. Previously we could see the flashes of artillery and hear the rumble of the big guns even though we were out of their range. Now we must be several hundred miles from where all the excitement is. Thank heavens.

Francis Austin is only a few miles from here but right now, because of the lack of transportation, I haven't been able to visit him. I hope to soon.

Your mail is coming through well now, packages as well as letters. Last evening two boxes arrived – one of food (crackers, peanut butter, chicken, caramels [in good condition], potato sticks, tongue) – the other the two green shirts. These shirts are just the thing, exactly what I wanted I certainly do appreciate your buying them for me.

I bought the crucifix you asked about just outside St. Peters Cathedral. It was very, very inexpensive. I simply bought it as a souvenir.

I received an envelope of razor blades from Mrs. Skiff the other day. I'll write and thank them when I can begin to catch up with my letters.

This is most brief, I know, I'll write another letter soon.

Love,

Son

Letter 264, 1944-10-28 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 27

28 October 44

Dear Mother & Dad,

Buy me another package or two of V-Mail paper & include it in the next package you send.

31 October 44

The mail is arriving in fine time now. A couple of days ago I received a letter of the 20th and that really is excellent service.

For a few days I have been fearing that I would lose my job, but everything has been straightened out for the time being. Because of the change from AA to trucking and other miscellaneous jobs, several officers are not longer necessary in the organization. However, the surplus officers have been put on detached service (still officially assigned to the 450th), and
somehow I have been retained in my old job. Capt. Kestenbaum, the dental officers and myself were extra, but no one wanted us on detached service, so we stay. Apparently the authorities wish to keep the same number of men required for AA so that it can easily be reconverted.

The weather has been cold but clear the last few days. At night there is a full moon, so even then I can wander about the area without [fear] of falling into a hole.

Both Lt. Goodson & Capt. Holmes have left from our tent and Lt. Hobbie & Capt. Kestenbaum have moved in. This morning the interior really looked barren but now, with their added beds and baggage, it is no longer quite so lonesome looking. We expect to move in buildings soon, so then life should be even more comfortable.

I expect to go to town to submit a requisition for medical supplies this afternoon, and then run over to see Francis Austin. We have two vehicles now, a jeep and a weapons carrier, so perhaps I'll be able to see a little of southern France. One group of the 450th is a good number of miles from here and is without medical attention, so perhaps I will be sent with them. That will rather hamper my sight-seeing jaunts about the city. Nevertheless, I had much rather go with them & feel I am doing something useful than sit about and waste my time.

The pictures of the hurricanes destruction came last evening. They really are excellent shots & I'll send them back someday for you to keep for me.

What kind of outfit is George in? I also received the addresses of Don Francis & Richard. Thanks a lot.

Don't worry about doing things for me at Christmas, for I already have so much stuff I'm carrying about with me now that I scarcely know what to do with it. I'll make out fine.

You probably are very wise not trying to get the cameos mounted now for I understand the prices are extremely high. They can never compare with the prices here in France, however for inflation is going full swing. If their wages rise in accordance with the rise in prices, the civilians will make out fairly well. However, our pay does not go up accordingly, so the wisest move for us to make is not to spend much of our pay. I'll still be sending mine home for you to salt away.

Yes, I remember Florence Dougherty well. I heard from Earl yesterday, the first time in months. It really was nice to know that he had not forgotten me completely. I also hear from Barbara quite frequently and it is she that keeps me informed with the gossip about Earl etc.

Please send me Jim's address. I haven't written to him in weeks, because I know he has been moving about and didn't want to have his mail following about the country. Phebe wrote saying she had heard from him in W. Virginia but she did not give me his address.

I'm certainly glad the discharge papers finally arrived, for I was afraid they had been waylaid. Had it been opened by the censors? It probably was slowed up because of its size. Yes, Volterra is the alabaster city. San Vivaldo is a very small village, south of San Miniato, and probably very difficult to locate on anything but a detailed map. The first medal or ribbon is simply for being in a particular theater of operations – I can’t remember exactly what its official title is without seeing the letters, but it refers to the North African, Middle East, Mediterranean, European theater of operations.

Capt. DiSario is returning by boat. Seldom are planes allotted for such purposes as his—

My vote has been sent in long ago and probably has arrived by now. You probably would never agree the way I split the ticket about, but I would have split it further if I could have done so. I know I couldn't change your mind, once you have made it up, but I do miss having some of those political arguments with you, dad. I'll straighten you out yet in regard to the
way you should vote.

I just finished a very nice lunch (with A Btry) – salmon, potatoes, spinach, bread & tomato juice. I'm stuffed to the gills, but probably will eat as much again tomorrow. Tomorrow we begin to eat with B Btry, for now the headquarters kitchen has moved far from here now.

Will try to get this note in the afternoon's mail. I'll be looking for more letters this evening.

Love,
Son

31 October 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I took a trip to the hospital today to see Francis & visited with him for a few minutes. Unfortunately it was late in the afternoon so I could stay only a short while. However, I expect to stay in this area for a while, so I'm sure I'll be seeing him again. He asked me to stay and eat, and the nurses in his ward did the same but I had to get back to the area. He really was surprised to see me, for the letter I had written had not yet reached him.

It is raining this evening, but not very heavily. It is comfortable in the aid station, however, with a warm fire burning and electric lights – illuminating the tent. We have two card tables like those folding ones we have for picnics as well as folding chairs. Very cozy, you know.

Your letter written on the 22 came tonight. That really is remarkable time.

I'm glad to see you have been gadding about a bit. I wish you would do that more often. You should get down to the Skiffs now and again and to Martha's etc, rather than staying cooped up at home. I have received the razor blades Skiff sent but as yet have not written, thanking them for them.

All those packages you have been telling me about sound great – yours, Frank's, Mrs. Skiff's, Barbara's (she wrote that she has mailed one), Martha's. I'll try to save some of them until Christmas if they should happen to come before then.

I asked you to send me Jim's address but it came in your letter tonight. Thanks.

The sleeping bag that Capt. Stinson got for me is really tops. Everyone else is freezing nights and I don't even use a blanket over mine. I usually wrap my coat over my feet and that is all the extra coverage I use. It is made rather “form fitting”, narrow at the feet and wider at the shoulders. A zipper closes it tightly up to the neck, and an attached hood like affair covers your head, leaving only a small opening through which to breathe. I seldom cover my head, however, for it isn't cold enough for that yet. It is made with one bag inside the other, a water proof one on the outside and the down filled liner in side.

[Drawing] I hope I can keep mine when I get out of the army for it is just the thing to carry on hiking trips. Not at all heavy and very easy to roll. Perhaps I will be able to manage to sneak mine home, or at least buy one after the war is finished.

Those who have been in other parts of France say the country is very beautiful, but this particular section is very desolate. The hills are rolling, with rocky ridges protruding, and col-
ored with splotches of short green grass and bushes. The combination of grass and stone gives
the countryside a mottled green and white appearance. Occasionally there are small clumps of
trees, and their autumn colors remind me [of] fall at home. Tall hills, approaching mountain
size, near the horizon, and when the sun hits their rocky tops they give the appearance of
being snow covered. The towns are widely scattered and have a small population except, of
course, for the main city of the section. One narrow house hedged street. That is the village.
The similarity to French North Africa is very striking – scenery, villages, people and all.
I have some developed negatives packed away in my suitcase. I'll try to remember to pull
them out tomorrow and begin to send them along to you.
I'm going to try to write to Jim, Martha & Barbara tonight, but probably will not accomplish
all of that. One maybe, anyway.

Love,
Son

November, 1944
MS026, box: 35 folder: 28

Letter 266, 1944-11-02 (back to Table of Contents)

Dear Mother & Dad,

Tonight I received the speediest letter on record. The letter you wrote on the 27th 7 mailed
on the 28th came this evening – 5 days! Believe it or not.

I'm glad to hear that you are taking care of yourself. Be sure you continue to do just that.
There's no reason why you shouldn't almost be in condition to go barn dancing with me by the
time I return.

The rolls of film which I took last March have finally arrived from the censors. They came
to Kenny Goodman in Italy & he has just forwarded them to me. I think a couple of them were
censored, but otherwise I am most pleased with the results. I'll enclose some of the contact
prints that were made as well as the negatives, and you can have enlargements made if you
wish. I was afraid that I had lost them forever, so even though they aren't remarkable I was
pleased as a kid with a new toy when they arrived.

I have no idea about Capt. DiSario, whether he will stay in the army or not. I'm sure,
however, that he will not be back here.

The “pink” pants are just dress clothes. They just look rather pink but really are not. They
usually are worn with a blouse. I've never worn mine yet probably never will.

Jack Gilbert wrote a note that came this evening. He says the going is pretty tough now up
in the mountains where he is, rain and deep mud.

I really wish you would make a point to get out more often rather than staying home by
yourselves. Don't worry about what I am doing, for I'm doing much less work now than I ever
thought of doing when I was teaching. This is the easiest life I've had in years. I honestly
mean that. Even the meals are wonderful now. The battery we are eating with has fine bakers,
and tonight the products of their talents were cherry pies (wonderful crusts) and pineapple
Dear Mother & Dad,

Remember the Mauldin cartoon which I sent to you several weeks ago concerning French drivers? I thought I fully appreciated it then, having had gruesome contact with French drivers (?) while in Italy. But no, I was incorrect. Now that I have observed this strange species of traffic hazard in its native environment, I see that I never fully estimated the situation. New Jersey drivers can't even approach those Frenchmen in their careen through traffic, slip into tiny spaces between two other vehicles or stop with a sudden lurch and scream of brakes. Though there are a few cars of normal American size, most of the gas buggies that infest southern France are either tiny, midget like affairs into which the occupants squeeze with sardine-like resignation or great hulks of top heavy, wide, cumbersome trucks. But it isn't enough that these cars exist. No. They also run, a few on gasoline but most of them by means of evil smelling wood burning contraptions that have been added to any section of the vehicle's anatomy with strength enough to support them. Great furnace like affairs on roofs, in front of radiators or extending off the rear, smoking and belching and sputtering. If traffic were only light or even moderate, their existence could easily be tolerated. However, as it is, the streets and highways are burdened with a continuous stream of cars, day and night, carrying army troops and materiel as well as civilians rushing back and forth like New Yorkers. The main streets of the city are as busy with traffic & pedestrians as Times Square, and just as noisy – police whistles, traffic lights, horns and to top all, clanging bells that announce the change from red to green and vice versa. Military traffic causes enough congestion, but nothing I have seen can compete with the jams caused by a truck or two (French) stalled along the roadside and being pushed by the many passengers it has accumulated. A truck or two can be taken in its stride, but not when it stops on a street, the middle of which is occupied by a string of ten or more trolleys, also stalled because of another jam further up the street. If the French trucks are not stalled, they putt along beside the trolleys at the same slow rate of speed, thereby tying up all vehicles behind. This is especially troublesome on upgrades when the trolleys, because of the terrific number of passengers they are carrying (they honestly are even hanging on the outside of the car, using toe holds wherever one presents itself, even sitting on the “cow catchers” on the front and back), just creep up the hills. The little French civilian cars complicate matters by swooping in and out of traffic in any little hole available, or racing down the street, with the horn howling, past a line of more or less patiently waiting drivers. These French drive with their horns and daredevil bravery but not with any sense. That wouldn't be exciting enough for them.

The French do have a lot to their credit, however, in comparison to the Italians. Despite the fact that the Germans have been here for years, the signs of their occupation are not so evident as in Italy, probably because the country was not in such a sad shape to begin with. In this particular section, the actual destruction of buildings and bridges also is most negligible. These people dress well and are clean and well groomed – not just the city dwellers but also those
in rural sections. Italians, talk note. In addition, the people seem to be keeping themselves busy, building bridges, cleaning up buildings, farming, hauling supplies – not congregating in groups on street corners or standing along the sidewalks watching the traffic go by, or riding about the countryside on bicycles. They are trying to help themselves, not waiting to have everything handed to them. When you have seen conditions in other countries, you admire such signs of self reliance.

I rode about the countryside again this afternoon, admiring the scenery while in search of a chain to lock up our jeep. All vehicles can be operated with the same key and consequently jeeps are being stolen right and left. Someone who needs transportation, hops in, drives off, and you may or may not ever find it again. If it does not reappear, the drivers pay goes down to rock bottom while he pays and pays dearly for his negligence. Last evening Capt. Stinson’s jeep disappeared, so we are taking all precautions to protect ours. We located a small chain at one of the engineer regiments that will do for the time being. It is wound around the steering wheel and fastened to the jeep through a hook on the side of the vehicle. Thus, though, it can be started, it cannot be driven far for the steering wheel is allowed little play and will not permit it to be driven around corners. That is the best that can be done and it appears to meet the requirements. It isn’t easily to file the chain loose without making the action too noticeable. We are hoping we can keep our car, after being so long without one.

Love,
Son

Letter 268, 1944-11-05 (back to Table of Contents)

5 November 1944

Dear Mother and Dad,

It’s a wonderful autumn day here in France, cool but not too cold, bright sun shining, a clear blue sky and hazy mountains off in the distance. Once we leave the desolate windswept hill on which we are temporarily bivouacked, the scenery changes entirely. The small valleys found in the indentations between the rolling hills are still verdantly green with grass despite the advanced season of the year. The countryside is quite sparsely populated, though it is not at all difficult to pick out the bright colored farm buildings scattered across the landscape, surrounded by the squares of cultivated land. Trees are numerous, but small patches are sprinkled liberally enough so that their flaming fall colors reminds one of New England during the same period. The windings of the roads, both the main highways and the small rural routes and country lanes, are easily traced by letting the eye follow the parallel rows of trees that mark their peregrinations. Yes, France is a pleasant place after all.

Is candy very scarce at home now? It it isn’t, I certainly would appreciate your sending me some. Herseys or Milky Ways or any of theat nature would care well in the mails now that the weather has begun to grow cooler. For some unexplained reason both candy and cigarettes are very scarce right here, perhaps because the French Black Market has been able to gain control of the supplies. Fortunately, the cigarette problem does not worry me, but those who have the habit are crying loudly over the situation. There was a recent article in the Stars and Stripes about it, some claiming that though we are unable to be issued such items from our
supply depots, anyone can go into the bars in town and buy cigarettes from French civilians for a hundred francs (two dollars) a package. That certainly is an encouraging note in our management of the war.

You asked me to include more requests for food so that you can continue to send me those packages I so thoroughly enjoy. You bet I will. I would like you to begin to send cocoa again, for now that cold weather is on its way, it will be just the thing for a snack before retiring. I can think of an enormous variety of things I would enjoy. I'll begin the list and you can make the selection. Crackers, pickels, Cheese spreads (Kraft in bottles), tuna fish, chicken, mustard, mayonnaise, sugar, cheese, sandwich spread, tongue, caramels, fig newtons, nuts, pop corn (to pop). Enough for one time?

I think that I shall go over to see Francis again this afternoon before we leave the area we are now in. Shortly we are planning to move into town and that will mean that we will be about an hour’s drive from the one time French sanitarium in which they are set up. However, when he gets into the city on a pass, we undoubtedly will be very easy to locate. Perhaps he will be looking me up instead.

[Letter is stamped by Danbury Post Office on May 7, 1945, Jan. 30 1945, Mar. 19, 1945, Mar. 12, 1945—apparently dates on which TW's parents sent packages with the items requested in this letter.]

Letter 269, 1944-11-07 (back to Table of Contents)
Yes, I still have some of the stones I collected in Italy, but I forgot to include them in the package I sent from Italy. I’ll get them off to you at another time.

So you finally managed to get to Hartford to see Miss Todd. I certainly am pleased that you could do that, for I am sure she appreciated the fact that you were interested enough in her to make a personal call. She doesn’t write as often as she once did, but that is perfectly understandable. I feel that I haven’t as often as I should either.

Are you really planning to rearrange the furniture in the living room? If you are, I’ll give you some more suggestions. Are you expecting to repaper also? It needs it badly, as well as a complete repainting job. Let me know when you set out on this new venture.

I’ve had the opportunity of seeing Marseilles, the second largest city in France (according to the French guide book which I bought). It is a very modern city, more like New York than any other city I have seen since coming overseas. The streets are crowded with vehicles and pedestrians, the stores large and apparently well stocked. Even the French versions of the Five and Tens are much in evidence, but instead of being pervaded by the aroma of hot dogs and pop corn, as ours are likely to be, that awful French perfume as well as the odor of wine (sold as we sell sodas) assails the nasal passages. I hope to really look around some time, and then I’ll give you more than a passing impression.

I heard today that Paris has been put off limits to all troops except those stationed in the city itself. I guess that means that I won’t be sightseeing there right away, even if I could somehow manage to secure a ride that great distance. Probably the ban will be lifted by the time I’m in a position to move up that way. I do want to visit there before coming home, however, for it is most highly praised.

The same type of French train that screamed its way about North Africa is found in this section of the world. I always think of those engines with their particular and peculiar whistle as being of North African origin because I first became acquainted with them there, but of course it is the other way around. The French colonials simply imported to their African colonies the type of engine with which they were familiar at home.

Time for supper. Captain Parrott has already left for the mess hall, but I wanted to add these few closing words. I’ll write again in a day or two. Don’t worry if you don’t hear from me regularly, for it can be attributed to the fact that I am busy, or am sightseeing, or am just too lazy to write. I really do pretty well, don’t you think, considering the fact that I am now a man of leisure?

Love,
Son

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Letter 270, 1944-11-09 (back to Table of Contents)

9 November 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

One toothbrush arrived safely in today’s mail. Both brush and letter doing well.

Are you keeping a print of all the pictures you have been sending me?

So now the voting is over. I know you are immensely pleased with the results. Well, anyway I am and I am not. I had hoped that Margaret Connors would replace Claire Boothe Luce, but
she lost, so the Stars and Stripes said, by only a few hundred votes. I remember hearing her speak, several years ago, and she seemed to be a very capable and conscientious worker. So it goes.

I heard from Albert Evitts today, a very nice note telling him how much he had enjoyed his visit to Italy also. May Sherwood told him about that blasted item that was in the paper the same day my letter to him arrived. I'll send his letter along one of these days for you to read.

No, so far the frankfurters have not yet arrived. However, the package from Mort & Martha came last evening, and I peeked into that. I'm planning to keep most of it until Christmas time. Those peaches do sound great, but I fear they would break under the terrific beating the packages take.

Now I understand what you mean concerning the money orders. It doesn't make a particle of difference to me whether you put them to my account or in the vault. Eventually I'll have to pay income tax on all that money anyway, and by the time that is paid out there probably won't be much left to worry about.

You will find that one of the negatives of the group I sent home a few days ago, is a picture of three fellows standing at the bottom of a steep bank. One of them is Pentin (Ruth May's boy friend), the other Tom Murphy, and the remaining one, of course, is I. She probably would like a couple of these prints, so I would appreciate your having them made for her. Dear old Esther Osborne. 'Nuff said.

I have been trying to find a good French grammar book and a good French-English dictionary in town, but I can't locate one. Ask Divvy if she can suggest a good one for you to get for me. I would appreciate your doing that. If you get it off fairly soon it still may get included in some of the Christmas mail ships. A second hand copy would be excellent. I remember having a "Hugo's" French book in Africa that was fine, but I left it there when moving to Italy. I'm certainly sorry now.

The stem has slipped out of my watch and I have been trying to locate a jeweler to fix it for me. All the shops, however, seem to have lost such men, even having notices on the doors advertising for helpers of that sort. I think I'll manage to find a watch maker soon, for Capt. Kestenbaum thinks he will be able to find one through some French civilians he has met.

Send me some dark shoe polish in a future package. Right now it is scarce and I could use a bit. Love, Son

Dear Mother & Dad,

I've been spending the evening alternately feeding the fire and pouring cups full of water on the tent pole, that is next to the stove, to prevent its threatening smoke to turn into flame. I think I have it under control now, thought the result is a charred section in the pole and a puddle of water around its base.

Maybe this will be the last time my A.P.O. will change for sometime, so perhaps it would
be wise to give the newspapers and magazines A.P.O. #758 as my address. I'm still located in
the same region. Only the address itself has been changed about.

Time record in reverse. Your V-Mail of Oct. 5 came tonight. Fine work.

One group of prints came tonight. Picture #93 is of Capt. Stratman (have a copy made so
I can send him one) and #162 was taken in Pisa on the tower.

Grandma wrote that the cousin of hers whom I was planning to talk to about the family
saw the item in the paper concerning me and spoke about it. I really wish you would go with
grandma to see her and ask about the family. It would not be difficult to do and I would
really appreciate your doing that for me. I'll tell you how to begin. Ask her the names of
her father & mother, their children and whom they married. Then (I'm not sure now if she is
related to us through her mother or her father) ask her the names of her mother's (or father's
if she is related through him) parents. Then her own father's (or mother's) sisters & brothers
& their children. I think there is a twice married person in the picture. I fear that my hurried
directions are most complicated. I'll try diagramming.

[diagram follows]

If she does not know names, or only first or last names, get same & make dashes for
material left out. If she does not know names but can tell you what to ask to clarify any more
facts I need.

No, Buddy is still in Italy.

I had planned to write several letters this evening but the colonel wandered into the aid
station and is keeping me amused with various and sundry tales. I'll try to write again tomor-
row.

Love,
Son

P.S. I'm enclosing some of the contact prints which the censor sent with the negatives I
have already mailed to you.

Letter 272, 1944-11-12 (back to Table of Contents)

Dear Mother & Dad,

Last evening your letter of August 31 containing the last set of insignia finally came. It
apparently had been misplaced somewhere along the line along with other mail of about the
same time. No, many of your packages have not yet arrived that were sent in August or before.
However, the first class package containing four rolls of film also came in yesterday's mail.

There was a very interesting item in the September 2 "Time" about the war in France and
how one of the German hospitals surrendered. If you can get that copy save it for me & also
show it to Mrs. Austin. I think she would be interested in it. Forget it. I found the article I was
speaking about in Newsweek and am enclosing it for you to read.

14 November 1944

I've been working a little bit today on my history. I don't have much material to refer to, but
the little I have collected since coming to Italy looms large as I try to go through it carefully.

12 November 1944
The overseas editions have some excellent titles but I can't get all of them that I would like. I'm using “Rats, Lice & History” [Little Brown, 1935] right now, a most excellent volume by Hans Zinsser.

Don’t worry about how much I am sending home. I know what I am doing. I keep all I need and a lot more, and usually have at least eighty to a hundred dollars in my wallet. I certainly won't have any use for that during one month unless you would advise me to go on a drinking spree in town or pick up a few of the girls that patrol the streets. I can spend my money on that rather than send it home if you would like.

Love,
Son

Letter 273, 1944-11-16 (back to Table of Contents)

Dear Mother & Dad,

Your letter came tonight giving me Ed's address. Believe it or not, I passed by his bivouac area a great many times going to and from town without knowing he was in that particular division. And now that his outfit has left, that information comes through.

Fig Newton's are on the menu this evening as I sit on my cot writing. Lt. Hobbie concocted a stove out of two five gallon oil cans, with appropriate openings for feeding, drafts, etc. & it really makes the tent most comfortable. We have a little coal & splinters of wood and waste paper from my packages for fuel, so somehow we manage.

Lt. Hobbie gave me his Vel-o-Pac today (by previous arrangement), swapping it for a broken one which the colonel gave me and which Hobbie mended. Now I can pack my blouse and other dress clothes without rolling them into crease provoking bundles. I think I have collected more junk already than any other officer in the outfit, including and mostly books and food. With the other suitcase I picked up, I'm really all set – except that I still have enough left over to fill a barracks bag.

My magazines are beginning to come through again, but the packages you sent in August have not come yet. One well wrapped (tinsel, string, tiny Christmas tree et al.) X-mas package came yesterday and also one of food –containing the aforementioned fig Newtons. I have a regular grocery store under my bed now, for I am not calling upon my own supplies so regularly now.

I took a shower in town today at one of the public “Bains et Douches”. Yes, here in France you go to a shower just as you would go into a movie – pay your admission at the door, go into one of the small compartments that has a small dressing room & shower room, shower, redress and go out about your business again. I feel clean for the first time since coming to France. We arrived late in the afternoon so the water was only lukewarm, but it was water, and that was most important.

I'm beginning to learn to touch type. I spend a few minutes every day practicing. Perhaps it will help me a little bit if I don't give it up in disgust. My main difficulty is trying to break the bad typing habits I had previously formed when I used the Warner system. That just doesn't go now.
I washed my rain coat today in gasoline trying to get out some of the red mud stains I acquired when we first came here. Some of the red tint still persists, but most of it disappeared with the rest of the dirt.

And so to bed.

Bon soir.

Love,
Son

20 November 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

When I was in Italy, there was a favorite bit of doggerel that was used in division for the fellows who were far in the rear at the P.B.S. area (Peninsula Base Section):

“Mother take down your service flag
Your boy’s in P.B.S.”

Well, now it appears that I too am in a part of France that corresponds to the similar rear areas in Italy – and I’m glad. Yea, verily. Listen, and you will see why.

A few short days ago we were living in tents. But today? Nothing less than a great, rambling chateau that in more propitious times was a health resort, famous for its sulfur baths. The one who designed the building(s) had delusions of castles, for it is a maze of odd shaped rooms, hallways, winding staircases, tunnel like entrances, rooms on varying levels, uneven roofs, & towers. Practically every room has a bath attached, and some have a few furnishings left – comfortable chairs, tables, wardrobes, and the like. All the conveniences associated with a hotel are available – a large dining hall for the men, a large kitchen, offices, bars. Most of the rooms that are now serving as offices have large desks, lamps & mirrors and thus could be easily converted. Electric lights and running water are the order of the day, and heat should eventually emanating from the many radiators if anyone could discover why the furnace fire so far has failed to alter the temperature of the rooms. Now do you see what I mean?

Capt. Stinson, Lt, Hobbie and I have one room together, managing to live quite comfortably despite the unaccustomed limitations of four walls. Soon tents probably will seem just as unusual.

Capt. Parrott and I went to the opera a few evenings ago, spending a very enjoyable if somewhat chilly evening. The opera was one with which I previously had not been acquainted, “Mireille” by Gonoud, and probably was played here only because its local setting buoys up its popularity. The singing, acting and stage sets were by no means top-notch, but were nevertheless excellent enough to make the presentation very worthwhile. The female star sang well, but was very stiff and a bit too buxom, the male lead’s voice was fair, but his stage presence was terrible, for he inherited all the old, wild arm flinging portrayals of emotion and always stood with his feet close together, toes pointing apart. His hips were fairly large, so that he reminded me of one of those rolly, polly toys that always return to the same position after being knocked about a bit. Not a very fitting picture [drawing inserted on left margin] of a dashing lover. The acting star was the contralto who played the witch. She received the
most spontaneous applause of the evening, and fully deserved that sign of appreciation. The
settings, especially those that portrayed the rocky, cave like home of the witch, the night scene
along the Rhone River, and the farm of Ramon were carefully staged. It was a noteworthy
example of the effect that can be secured with painted slate and dim lighting. The orchestra
was not remarkable in the least.

The reaction of the public to opera in Europe is wholly unlike that found in the states.
Here the people attend for enjoyment, just as they would any show. Home, a great many
go because “it is the thing to do” or because they can display their glittering jewels and new
evening gowns. People don’t “dress” here, at least they didn’t that evening. They came in street
clothes and many kept their coats on because the large opera house was apparently unheated.
But the point is, they enjoyed the performance, for they could understand the words that were
being sung. And we, like fools, go to operas at home, sung in every language but English, (and
pretend to fully appreciate them), simply because they were written in another language and
thus “should not be translated”. And then we wonder why opera is not popular as it is over
here. Deems Taylor has the right idea in this matter, but his cries go unheeded. Just think, the
French opera goers are even so unawed by the majesty of opera that they dare to laugh when
the unexpected happens or a bit of moveable scenery fails to function properly. We don’t dare
laugh, for opera is a sort of unreprehensible God to us, who can’t even laugh when the script
allows, for we never understand what is being said.

Some packages that should have arrived long ago have not yet appeared. Can it be that
the story about one of the mail boats burning in the harbor is true?

Four of us saw “Wuthering Heights” in French at one of the movie theaters in town. I still
can’t figure out how they are made, for the picture is the original acting, made in Hollywood
in English, but now a French sound track has been substituted. The puzzle is – how do they
make the actors mouth movements, speaking English, jibe with the French sound track? They
do, and it does not look unusual. Je ne comprend pas.

Several Christmas packages have come and I have delved into the ones that contained food.
Esther Olson sent a bag of nuts (completely gone now). Mr. & Mrs. Skiff’s box is in the process
of going & some of your regular food parcels also are stacked away in my larder.

Happy Thanksgiving, if I don’t write again before that day.

Love,
Son

24 November 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Did I ever tell you that the box of underwear came? It did, in fine condition. Thanks a lot.
Also the thread and the V-Mail paper. No, Beard’s history has not come yet. Don’t worry about
there being too much fruit cake. It keeps well and thus I will have a snack handy to nibble on
evenings.

Perhaps Bill is going to school, but I can’t see it, being in a replacement pool. That is just
what it sounds like, – a pool of men to be uses as replacements for vacancies caused by battle
losses, etc. It sounds as if he is telling his same old tales.
I wish you would have your hair fixed shorter in a roll, rather than a bun. It would be much more becoming to you. And how about those teeth? You are still evading a direct answer to that query.

Yes, dad, we get butter here now, fresh butter rather than the waxy canned stuff we received one time. Food really is pretty good right now, except for occasional relapses.

27 November 1944

I fear I'm becoming too lax in my letter writing. Look at the number of days since I began this note.

More and more packages have arrived. One of the boxes containing the frankfurters came last evening. But best of all my sweater, scarf & mittens came through. They really are great. It was just like Christmas, opening the packages they were wrapped in. Beard's History was in that box also. I really am pleased to receive all these items. Thanks again.

One of the films you sent me & which I used was no where nearly as long as it should have been. The required length for a good many exposures just wasn't there. If you wish, you could send me some bulk film and I can roll my own. It's not difficult to do that and should be much less expensive.

I have not received letters for several days now, but first class mail undoubtedly has been held up because of the packages. My “Time” & “Newsweek” still are not coming, but perhaps we had better wait a little longer before jumping on them. It could be the slowness of the mail.

Mildred's package has come also. She included some very nice “Old Spice” talcum and shaving cream, as well as the edible items. Both she and Mrs. Skiff sent some “Blue Moon” cheese that was excellent. I'll write to her this afternoon and tell her how much I appreciate her gift.

I have packages, and packages, and packages piled under my cot. I simply have so much food I don't know what to do with it and I know there is more on the way. I think I'll start selling to the French and cash in on their inflated prices. On second thought, perhaps I hadn't better. (The army doesn't approve of such practices.)

The weather still is pleasant, cool but sunshiny. I went for a short joy ride yesterday afternoon with Lt. Hobbie & Lt. Fort, snapping pictures and enjoying the scenery. The mountains (not mountains, really, but hills) are very rugged, barren, rocky affairs, covered with scrub evergreens up to the point where the drops become so steep and soilless that the roots cannot subsist.

I've been rereading the slush that spilled from my pen and I'm most disgusted. It doesn't sound interesting even to me. I'll take a break now and write more at a more propitious time.

Love,
Son

P.S. Some copies of my magazines came this evening (mailed in Oct.) and my address still has not been changed from the 350th. Will you see that this is taken care of. Write them an emphatic letter. Perhaps I'll do the same.
Dear Mother & Dad,

This evening my magazines began to arrive addressed to the 450th so don't begin to plague the publishers right away. They will reach me quite regularly even though the A.P.O. is not correct. Eventually they will make the change to 758 that you have given them.

Jim Birtles is in Italy now. I heard from him yesterday. My letters have not reached him yet so he believes I am still there also. I wrote yesterday telling of the change and also helping him contact Jim Gallagher.

Your cartoon by Mauldin concerning jeep protection really is true to life. You practically have to do that to keep from losing vehicles. You honestly can't leave a jeep unattended in the city and ever expect to find it when you get back. Mauldin really knows his stuff when it comes to depicting army life.

29 November 1944

Nate & Rachel sent me a Christmas card. Tell Frank that the cake he sent came through in fine condition, and that I want to thank him for thinking of me in that way. I'll try to write personally, but right now my correspondence is going to pot. I really keep busy accomplishing very little. It appears that the further back from the front you get, the more red tape & paper work there is involved. And we are getting plenty.

That number five something or other perfume you asked about is impossible to get here now. The French people are crazy for perfume. I've seen them lined up outside perfume shops waiting for the opening hour in order to be able to douse on that ill smelling water. (The word is Chinelle (?) No 5)

The clipping about Jack Vaccarelli was not in the letter you said you were enclosing it in.

Dad, your description of the concert was wonderful. I really mean that. I just laughed & laughed for I could almost picture the scene—Remember? “Gosh it was fine, but I couldn't understand a word she say. And the fellow that played the piano made me nervous. He would almost jump off the stool, then he would bang his nose on the keys, then almost fall backward off the stool. But I suppose it was good, had a full house and everyone seemed to enjoy it.” I quoted this so you could compare it with Barbara’s description. “Her accompanist looked like a dead fish. He was very near sighted, and his figure tapered from a barrel chest down to his tail coat. Just like a porpoise! However, his playing was excellent- So if closed one's eyes and listened it was an enjoyable evening.”

Our room is becoming more and more comfortable. The heat has begun to ease the through the radiators, and in addition we have been loaned a radio. Really very nice.

I bought tickets for the opera today for Sunday evening's performance of Aida. Capt. Parrott, Lt. Hobbie and I are planning to go together, perhaps taking the afternoon of also just roaming about the city.

Did I tell you that we also have a barber at our “establishment”? Yes, and a laundry, too. This is the life.

I'll be writing again soon.

Love,
Son

302
P.S. I have just been looking through the pictures which you sent me and I'm sure some are missing. All the numbers are there but I know that certain negatives I have sent are not represented. The negatives were very dark, but something should have been made from them. Be sure not to throw any of the films away even if they apparently are no good. I’m sure that prints can be made from some of them. One was a shot of wrecked railway cars and another was a view of a city high on a hilltop.

December, 1944
Letter 276, 1944-12-05 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 29

V-Mail

5 December 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm sending an airmail letter tonight to see which reaches you the quicker. The V-Mail should, for we have a regular V-Mail printing & photographing establishment here in France now.

I went to the opera Sunday night, expecting to see Aida, but the baritone developed something or other so we were subjected to Werther instead. I knew that opera by name only and really was disappointed not to see the opera I had planned. The singing was still as good and as bad as that in Mirielle and the acting just as corny. However, I did spend a most enjoyable evening so the money was well spent. Lt. Hobbie was ill and could not use his ticket so Lt. Fort and I took Sgt. Burns, the battalion sergeant major, with us. I think he really appreciated our asking him to go along.

The climate is still very comfortable – cool but sunny days, you know. The type of weather I enjoy.

Merry Christmas –(that in case this letter travels more slowly than I think it should)

Love,
Son

Letter 277, 1944-12-05 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 29

5 December 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'll try sending a V-Mail at the same time this evening to test the speed of both types of postal service. Let me know the winner. A new V-Mail office has been established here in France so the letters of that type should reach you much sooner than before.

I was pleased to learn that some of my packages mailed in Italy have reached home. Dad didn’t sound at all enthusiastic about the platter and large pictures but I like them nevertheless. Some of the scenes in the picture guides to Italy are very familiar to me. I really was very fortunate in finding them for they are quite expensive to buy and are very scarce. The other packages that I sent at the same time should be arriving soon. One was sent first class but
apparently it didn't travel that way.

I'm returning the Mauldin cartoons you sent for you to keep. Does that appear in the local paper now? I know it is syndicated in many of the paper now, but you have never said it is in the Danbury News.

My letters are becoming very scarce but I just can't seem to write lately. Just in a rut I guess. I'll get going again one of these fine days.

Love,
Son

[Mauldin cartoon enclosed with jeep chained to a tree]

Italian Christmas Card (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 29
Christmas card in Italian

When I bought these I thought I would be in Italy at Christmas time and they would be most appropriate cards. Any way, here's wishing you a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year in English – it means the same no matter in what language it is written.

Love,
Son

Christmas card (back to to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 29
V-Mail Christmas card

Note: A very merry Christmas to you both. I'll be seeing you next year.

Love, Son

Letter 278, 1944-12-10 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 29

V-Mail 10 December 1944
Dear Mother & Dad,

Thanks for Ted's address. I'll contact him when I am sure what my own address will be. Incidentally, the SHAEF in his address means Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force. He's right up there with the big shots.

Did you ever receive the negatives showing me (and several others) standing outside the entrance to some caves the Italians had dug for protection? I think they were in that group from which I never obtained prints, the ones I asked about previously.

Thebe has been making also sorts of wild guesses about Jim's destination, even interpreting the fact that he saw flying fishes to mean he was in the “Road to Mandalay” or India. I suppose by now she has learned that he is in Italy. Isn't that typical of her imagination?
Jim Gallagher has been transferred from his job as General's Aide to a staff position in a field artillery battalion. He admits that now he feels that he is really doing something again.  

Love,  
Son

**Letter 279, 1944-12-10**  
MS026, box: 35 folder: 29  
V-Mail 10 December 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,  

Remember the can of frankfurters I told you I had finally received? Tonight it served as the basis for a snack supper similar to those we often had at home Saturday evenings. Capt. Parrott & I returned from town too late for chow so we decided to do our own cooking. I cooked the “hot dogs” in my mess kit while he made cocoa in our custom cues.[?] I had a little mustard left and Capt. Stinson had some green relish and with a few slices of bread from the kitchen we had a fine meal. It honestly was one of the best and most enjoyable meals I've had since coming overseas. Just why that should be is hard to say. Perhaps because I was able to satisfy a particular hunger for a special item of food.

We saw “Carmen” this afternoon. It was an excellent production, some of the settings being much better than I saw in New York. These French like the uncut version. I saw many little scenes that never remember hearing about before.

Love,  
Son

**Letter 280, 1944-12-10**  
MS026, box: 35 folder: 29  
V-Mail 10 December 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,  

Perhaps I had better begin to write V-Mail letters if mine have been arriving so slowly. I must admit that recently my letters have been too infrequent, but you should have received more letters than you have.

Only my A.P.O.# has been changed. I am still in the same place. However, before long I fear that I will have another A.P.O. number in another organization, for we are on the verge of being disbanded and I am to be transferred. Exactly where I am to be is not certain, but the rumors sound very good.

I'm pleased that the packages from Italy came at last. There is no reason whatsoever why the vase should have been cracked when the other more fragile articles were unharmed. Probably some examiner was careless and dropped it when the package was being censored. The little lamp supposedly is very old. Did the roll of maps ever come? I believe that you did not mention them.

I've been gadding again. Saw “Damnation of Faust” at the opera Friday evening and this
afternoon am planning to see “The Barretts of Wimpole Street” starring Catherine Cornell.

Love,
Son

Letter 281, 1944-12-10 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 29

10 December 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Another package came this evening addressed to, surprisingly enough, to A.P.O. #21. Food, food, & more food. I have my own individual larder now, stacked in cardboard boxes under my bed.

Katherine Cornell is in town with her production of “The Barrets of Wimpole Street”. Lt. Fort and I saw this afternoon’s production at the Red Cross Theater. It is the finest production I have seen overseas, without any reservation – the acting, the costumes, the setting, all up to Broadway standards. A news item in the Stars and Stripes commented on how greatly the show was appreciated and well received by a G.I. audience, especially since it is the first legitimate production that many of the men have ever witnessed. The applause and curtain calls certainly indicate that a show of that sort is not out of place over here. Unfortunately one of this type does not lend itself to easy production near combat zones, for adequate theaters would not be available. However, back here we need entertainment too.

Tomorrow morning I go to find out what my new job is to be. Probably I will be working in a medical supply depot. Capt. Parrott & Capt. Kestenbaum have no idea where they will be going, but I feel that they will be well taken care of.

If I tell you all the night life I have become involved in recently, you will think I am doing nothing here but hitting the hot spots. That’s not quite the case, however. It just happened all in a short period.

“The Damnation of Faust” was playing at the opera the other evening. Capt. Parrott bought tickets, not knowing what he was getting, but accidentally made an excellent choice. It was the finest opera I have seen so far in these parts. A new crop of singers popped up from somewhere, so I was not afflicted by my ballet like tenor. The music of Faust is very unexpected and surprising, and the orchestra was better than usual. Faust has a great deal of ballet involved which was most capably handled by the cast. Even the angels flew through the air in typical Peter Pan style. The highlight in production was the ballet of the spirits performed on a completely blackened stage. Mephistopholes’ face and great long hands were painted with luminous paint and alone were visible as he sang. Then the spirits (dancers dressed in black so they could not be observed but carrying luminous banners of some sort) did a ballet with only their luminescent strings showing—like will-o-the-wisps prancing about the Irish countryside. Another chorus that I particularly enjoyed was the men’s fugue in the tavern, ending with a drunken version of aj [?] amen.

Those new glasses sound pretty snazzy. All you need now is a new hair do and new teeth. Do you get me?
No, Clare hasn’t dropped into ask my opinion on French affairs yet. You probably would have difficulty locating Mud, Mules, and Mountains for I believe it was published over here as a collection of Mauldin cartoons. Perhaps it was also printed at home, but I do not know. I’ll be looking for those French books. So far progress has been most negligible. I think Ted probably is in Paris, but I’m not sure. Capt. Parrott meets a young French girl who is studying medicine at the University here, and apparently made quite a hit with her. She really is very nice, very attractive, very intelligent and speaks English quite well. However, her parents won’t let her go out without a chaperone of sorts, according to French customs of “nice girls”. Somehow or other I became involved the other evening with taking along the approved “caretaker”. Never again, thank you. She was not pretty even if you must know, spoke about three words of English and couldn’t dance well. You can imagine how thoroughly I enjoyed myself that night. The next time will have to be a different attendant or else I’ll go with the gal myself. Say! That’s not a bad idea. I saw some small statues in town that are used in French nativity scenes at Christmas time. They are very colorful and perhaps I will buy a couple if I think they can be shipped. You should see me sporting about in my blouse and pinks. I’m glad I bought them when I did, for I’ve had a little use of them already. I’m almost beginning to feel civilized again. Marlin Robinson, whose address you sent, was in my class in high school. Perhaps he is nearby. If I run into his outfit I’ll look him up. Time for bed tonight. I’ll try to write more often, for I hate to have you worrying when you don’t receive a letter. I try, anyway.

Love,
Son

Letter 282, 1944-12-13 (back to Table of Contents)  
MS026, box: 35 folder: 29

V-Mail 13 December 1944
Dear Mother & Dad,  
I’ll try a V-Mail ever so often to see how quickly they reach you. It’s Major Stratman now! Kenny Goodman wrote that his promotion has gone through. That man really deserves any advancement of that sort which he can get. I heard from Bill Van Wyck this evening. His letter was delayed because it was sent to my 88th Division address, but, late or not, I really enjoyed receiving his note. In case you should ever want it, his address is 34 Silver St., Middletown. Some of the fellows in the 350th have sent me their printed V-Mail Christmas cards. I’ll enclose one in a letter shortly. Many of the medics have become casualties since I left, but the aid station groups still seems to be intact. I wish I had more news about what has been happening to them.
Dear Mother & Dad,

Perhaps my letters arrived at home the same way yours came here— all in one great bundle. However, I am sure that there are more on the way and so am expecting more this evening. Service on some items is very quick. The can of shoe polish and dictionary have already come as did a late November News Times. Many others are still among the missing.

Some of the pupils in Kenneth Neal’s wife’s class sent me letters. They came in a bundle in yesterday’s mail. One of these days I’ll compose a saga of my adventures and travels so they will know what I have been doing.

You made a wise choice in selecting Melba toast to include in some of my packages. It packs very well and is really fine for making snack sandwiches. I’ve been eating it with raspberry jam and cheese lately.

Did you ever receive the negatives of Jim & I taken in Italy? I know I have never received prints of some of the negatives I have sent home & I fear they are lost. I believe I will hang onto them from now on rather than risk losing any more. If those last pictures did not print well it can be blamed on the printing, for, by looking at the contact prints the censors made, I’m sure they should be sharp & clear. I feel that whoever is doing the printing for you either isn’t very careful in his work, or is using the wrong type of paper. I have had some printed here and the results are most satisfactory.

Dad, you lose. The picture taken in the rain coast was in Italy last winter and was a winter parka with a fur lining. My coat is very similar to that one but not exactly the same.

I’m glad you were able to enjoy the traditional turkey dinner rather than some unsatisfactory substitute. I read that turkeys were going to be very scarce at home, and wondered if you were going to be lucky enough to get one. I see your same lucky “buymanship” still holds.

Yes, tobacco is scarce at home and just as scarce here. I’m certainly glad that I don’t smoke, for some are finding it pretty tough to get along on the limited supply they are receiving. Your guess is as good as mine as to what is happening— aren’t they being sent across? — are the natives here stealing them before they can reach the troops? — are our boys working on the docks selling supplies to the black market? Who knows.

No, I’m no where near Wilber.

I finally received a letter from Martha begun the first part of October and finished late in November. She certainly must keep busy to take that long to write.

I really received quite a bit of fam mail last evening Mable Wooley, Esther Olson, Aunt Onie, the Gage family, Angie Newland, Mildred, Mary Anita, & Miss Todd. By the way, Mable Wooley gave me a sudden promotion to Capt. Decent of her, wasn’t it?
I'm planning to drive out to see Francis in a few days and take him the latest News Times. He invited me out to eat, but is quite a long drive, going down into the city and then out again in his direction and I'm not sure I can arrange to stay that long. Capt. Parrott might go along to get a partial plate fitted where one of his teeth is missing.

Did I ever tell you that I bought a guide book to France (in French) so I can get some help in my sightseeing? I really don't get about too much, but I like to see something worth while when I do get away.

I'm going in after medical supplies this afternoon and perhaps I'll buy a couple of the small statues the French use for Christmas scenes. They are very colorful and well made. The only drawback is that they may not ship well. I think I'll trust it, anyway.

Love,
Son

Dear Mother & Dad,

Much as I hated to, I had to open your Christmas gifts early. I am to be transferred to another outfit in a few days and I want to be able to pack as much as I can in my luggage without resorting to any more boxes than I can possibly help. It is difficult to try to thank you for all you sent – mittens, ties, handkerchiefs, tweezers and the old spice shaving equipment. You chose very wisely. I can use everything you sent.

My great problem right now is what to do with all the food I have stored under my bed. I can't carry it all, that is certain, and I can't eat it all. I guess I'll just eat & carry as much as possible & leave the rest.

I'm finally getting around to painting my baggage, now that necessity is forcing me. Lt. Hobbie's name & Major Mellin's have disappeared under a layer of black paint and tomorrow I'll superimpose mine.

I'm going to open Martha's presents in a couple of minutes. Accomplished! She made a very fine selection of books, wash cloths, soap, tooth powder, V-Mail, figs. Very nice.

An interruption of several days. However, while waiting for the mail this evening I'll add a few more words and get a note of sorts off anyway.

Uncle Hal & Aunt Amanda sent me a very nice selection of cake & cookies. They came in surprisingly good condition, still very fresh and edible. Everything was homemade too and this is an extremely fine feature.

Another of your packages of food came last evening, containing V-Mail, gum-drops, saltines, potato sticks, sardines & chicken. I'm ready to open my own commissary now and compete with the French black market. Thanks again.

Most of the officers here are going to a big shindig & dance this evening at the Transporta-
tion Officers Club. However, I think I'll spend my night writing letters and getting some sleep which I badly need. I guess I'm just a kill joy, but I don't seem to go much for this night life. Practically everyone has a date he's taking along and I would feel out of place without one. Too, I don't go much for all the drinking that seems to go along with an evening of that sort, so I guess I'll stay here as usual.

Love,
Son

Letter 285, 1944-12-17

Dear Mother & Dad,

I have a few items I think you might enjoy seeing and I'll enclose them in this note. They are pretty self-explanatory. My pocket is full of small Italian lire notes that I never turned into francs so I'll send them along also.

It has been so long since I have hear from you that I've almost lost contact with what you have been doing lately. Perhaps when the Christmas rush is over the regular mail service will become normal again.

I haven't been spending much time on my history lately, but I haven't forgotten about it. I work in spurts and am using Time & Newsweek for getting examples of points I wish to illustrate. I also received your notice that you are sending Time to me for the coming year. Thanks a lot. I really appreciate that.

Love,
Son

[Italian lire notes enclosed: 1, 2, and 5 Lire notes. Two Mauldin cartoons also enclosed.]

Letter 286, 1944-12-20

Dear Mother & Dad,

A head cold has kept me feeling pretty bum [?] the last few days, but I'm still dashing about. I'll be feeling much better in a day or two I'm sure.

You did not send me Jim's complete address, but I had a short note from him this evening and so have it now. He has been over Germany once so far, but gave me no more information about his activities.

450th Bomb Group
721st Bomb Sqd.
A.P.O. #520

Love,
Son

[310]
Monday afternoon I did my shopping for Christmas decorations along with hundreds of other citizens of the city. Open air booths have been erected in a park at one end of the main street and it is there that the tiny figurines for the crèches are concentrated. A crèche, as you probably know, is a nativity scene made of figures portraying the Biblical characters and local French personages visiting and worshipping at the side of the new born babe. The figures here are made of clay and can be purchased in varied sizes. The ones I selected are about an inch in height, very well made & carefully presented, and by shopping about I was able to acquire a complete scene. Of course any number of figures can be used, but I have about twenty, including the animals, and they made a very striking group. Thousands of these statuettes are lined up in the shops lining the sidewalks and the purchasers look each one over carefully before the makes the final selections, just as we Americans do with the piles of Christmas tree decorations that fill our stores at this season. Apparently every home has its own crèche, taking as much effort with it as we do with our trees. I have mine arranged on the wide window sill beside my bed where I can easily admire what I have bought.

In addition to small figurines, I also bought a few larger ones that I thought were fairly well made. One, an old woman wearing a broad brimmed black hat and a flowered apron, I bought for you. The others, and I may buy a few more, you can keep if you wish or give to some of those who have been asking for a souvenir. I'll do my best to pack them well, for they are very fragile and won't take much of a banging about.

You would have enjoyed seeing me doing my stuff. When I finally located the shop that I thought had the best collection, I got a shallow wooden box that is furnished for keeping your figures in while doing the selecting, and in my best French manner, looked and felt and weighed each tiny figurine before depositing it therein. Then the owner carefully wrapped each one separately in tissue and then put them all together in excelsior wrapped in a newspaper. Today, in a small town nearby, I found a little cardboard building to use as the background and stable, and will ship that along also. Many of the scenes have mountain scenes, houses, etc. of papier mache, but I felt that would be too large & expensive to buy. All these are surprisingly expensive, especially at our rate of exchange. If I don't tell you how much I paid for all this you will be much more contented.

I had a Christmas card from Seth and a short note telling me that at last he has been released from the hospital. However, he is not with the 630th as originally planned but now is with the 1st Armored Division. His address in case you should ever want it:–

Lt. Seth P. Ulman 0-1695646
Co. A, 47th Med. Bn. Arm’d
A.P.O. #251
C/o P.M. New York, N.Y.

It is evident that I am still with the 450th. No more news has as yet come concerning my change, and I am hoping I can stay here at least until after Christmas. Then I won't mind the transfer quite so much. It is much more enjoyable to be with friends during the holidays than to be thrown in with a group of strangers. However, if that happens, c'est la guerre! I can stand the shock.

Love,
Son

311
Chistmas Card from Seth Ulman to TW

“Seasons Greetings from Italy” Dear Trum,

This card is to celebrate the season of the sweetest story ever told. I shall not sour it with a current account of my story, save to indicate that I am again in the manger, swaddled in mud. I am anxious to know how you have made out and in hopes you will write. Wassail and Merry Christmas!

Seth

Letter 287, 1944-12-22

22 December 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

I am no longer assigned to the 450th, but I am still staying here for the time being. My new organization is the 409th AAA Gun Bn, but do not address any mail there. In a short time the 81st Base Medical Depot Company will be formed, and it is to that outfit that I will be assigned. I have no idea what the A.P.O. of the 81st will be, so I'd rather not have my address changed. If it underwent all those transfigurations, my mail would become so scattered I probably never would receive all of it. Instead, continue to write a before until you hear otherwise.

When you show Warren Joli my pictures, tell him that I feel many of them could be much better if they were more carefully printed on better paper.

The radio has been telling us about the heavy snowfall Connecticut has been experiencing. It sounds as if you might have a white Christmas after all. I wish I were home to see it.

How large is the cheese box you wrote about? That sounds very interesting. I'll be looking forward to seeing it, especially when you have it cleaned & waxed.

I wrapped a couple of packages last evening and will get them off tomorrow. The wooden box contains the small clay figures for the crèche that I bought in town. When you open it be very careful for the figurines are very tiny and thus can easily be lost in the mass of paper I have enveloped them in. The cardboard box is just an assortment of odds & ends – a guide book to Italy, the Gilbert & Sullivan I am returning, postcards, map of Florence and a bottle of perfume (not very wonderful).

You mean Major Case was in Belgium. He probably is back in France by now or in German hands. The news isn't at all pleasant, is it? The officials are emphasizing the bright side, but it doesn't look at all encouraging to me.

I'm sure I sent some letters you never received. For example, did you ever receive the one asking you to contact Grandma's cousin & ask her about her family? That is one I recall writing during that period. My mail is arriving very poorly.

Yes, occasionally we have hot water here, enough for taking baths. I took one the other evening and decided that perhaps I shouldn't take any more. The water was wonderfully hot, as I left the faucet open wide and went back to my room to undress. By the time I returned
the tub was filled and I slammed the door closed & climbed in for a long soak. I had a cold and thought it might be wise to sweat it out and consequently had the water on as hot as I could stand it. It really was wonderful – the first bath I've had since coming overseas (Don’t worry – I do take showers occasionally!) when I had baked sufficiently – until the perspiration rolled off my face – I dried briskly intending to hop into bed as quickly as possible. Picking up my wet, soggy towel I reached for the knob – and it wasn’t there. Some thoughtful soul had apparently taken it as a souvenier. By shouting and banging on the door I finally managed to get one of the officers to my rescue. He was willing, of course, but the knob was missing on his side also. And I was cooling off rapidly. Thanks heavens the door knob collector had not removed all the knobs in the building, for finally, by removing one off another door, I was able to escape. No, I didn’t get pneumonia. In fact, I'm feeling better.

Love,
Son

Letter 288, 1944-12-19 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 29

V-Mail 19 December 1944
Dear Mother & Dad,

I was finally persuaded to go to the party last evening after all. After waiting so many days I still failed to receive any mail of importance (one dated 16 November arrived) and I guess I needed to get away from here for a few hours. The club is a very nice one and so I had a pretty good time. Of course I didn’t get too drunk or pick up very many of the French girls. Temperance is my motto.

I’m going to the opera this afternoon to see “Carmen”. I understand it is one of the favorites here so the production should be one of the best. I really enjoy the operas here even though they cannot compare with the Metropolitan.

I have been planning to send a money order for your Christmas gift, but my trips have missed the Post Office. When I do finally send it I want you to use the money for yourselves and not put it away for me. Understand?

Love,
Son

Letter 289, 1944-12-18 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 29

V-Mail 18 December 1944
Dear Mother & Dad,

You and Phebe should get together. She imagines all kinds of insinuations and hints in Jim’s letters, but even if I should give any, you’d never think of looking in mine. It's probably just as well.

Don’t worry. I haven’t been to Paris and come in contact with those wild French drivers
there. I'd like to, but the army says “no”.

No, I have never read “Brave Men”, but I still would prefer that you do not send it. I have too many books already. Thank Isabel & Summer, won’t you?

I’m planning to go into town this afternoon on business and while there also buy some of the little pottery statues that the French here use in their nativity scenes at Christmas time. I’m not sure how expensive they are, but if they are fairly reasonable I’ll get a few for Martha, Barbara, Isabel etc. They are very typical of this region and I think they may appreciate having a few. They are dressed as peasants of the various regions and should be interesting if only for that reason.

Love,
Son

Letter 290, 1944-11-23 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 29

23 December 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Thanksgiving evening and I feel well fed. Today’s dinner was fine – turkey, of course, dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, cranberry sauce, lettuce, onions, radishes, bread and butter, coffee, nuts and, believe it or not, mince pie (and good, too!) Yes, we ate well and amply, but it lacked that touch of home that is necessary to make it completely enjoyable. Next year we surely should be home to celebrate together again.

I’m munching raisins as I sit cross-legged on my cot with my back leaning against a luke warm radiator. The weather still is very pleasant and very reminiscent of home in the fall – gray skies, chilly, light winds, drying leaves rustling on the branches, piles of fallen leaves on the ground. I wonder if it ever really becomes New Englandishly gold here. I doubt it.

I have bought a watch for myself through the P.X. My good old standby has finally given out, the stem having lost its grip on the “innerds”, I can’t seem to get it repaired in town, for all the jewelry shops have so few watchmakers that small cards advertising “men wanted” are displayed in the shop windows.

Those who know say that it is almost as safe to be in the front lines as it is to drive about the large French cities, such as Paris or Marseilles. These drivers here really are terrific, going hell bent for election one minute only to stop at the next corner to talk with a friend. Truly they are the most thoughtless and reckless drivers with whom I have ever had contact.

One of the officers in a battery in another section of this region has been able to become acquainted with a number of French civilians and gain some insight into what has been going on as well as what is happening now. I thought you might like to hear a little of what he told me.

First of all, concerning the Germans who occupied this part of France. The occupation was very proper—no mistreatment of civilians, no allowing of thievery or other misdemeanors. Any misconduct that did occur amongst the soldiers was promptly punished by severe court martial sentences. However a good many Frenchmen were forced to go to Germany as laborers. Also, the French received no food from the Germans to augment their meager rations. Many of the
stories concerning German censorship of radio programs also appears to be based on fable, for reliable sources claim that everyone who cared to listen to B.B.C. news broadcasts did so, despite orders to the contrary. The occupying armies realized that this was happening, but nothing was ever done to stop such information from reaching the populace. Also, it is evident the many French did collaborate with the Germans, for when the Allies gained control, a good number of women had their heads shaved (on a red carpet in front of town hall) for consorting with German soldiers. They have disappeared to be absorbed in the more tolerant & larger cities. Many stores has “Collaborateur” posted on their windows, warning they are not to be entered under threat of punishment established by the F.F.I. The mayor and leading citizens of several towns have been imprisoned. No, the French didn’t like the Germans.

When asked where the black market was, they explained that the black market was everywhere. Each grocery, each bakery, each butcher shop is its own little black market. You can, of course, buy your regular ration, but if you want an extra loaf of bread, or a little more fat for frying you go with the owner into the back room, pay an enormous price and secure the extras. Prices are enormously high. It costs a small family of four about eight dollars a day to eat—and only the minimum of foods. The men are allowed a tiny issue of tobacco a month, the women none. One of the most vicious black markets is in American cigarettes, hijacked, stolen or sold to the operators. One pack brings about two dollars or more. How many supplies of that sort are failing to reach the soldiers hands is impossible to say, but undoubtedly they amount to a great quantity.

I may be able to buy you a little perfume. I realize you don’t care for it particularly, but I think you may enjoy one bottle as a souvenir. The really good perfume just can’t be found, but I believe I can get some of pretty good quality. I’ll let you know when I do.

I’m enclosing a few negatives, three of Jim and I in Italy. They are very fuzzy, but if you think they will print at all well, make copies for Mrs. Gallagher to send to Jim or to keep for herself.

Love,
Son

Letter 291, 1944-12-24 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 29

24 December 1944

Dear Mother & Dad,

Christmas Eve in France. Oklahoma, -North Africa, -France – and still the battles rage. This season of the year makes me more homesick than ever, if how I feel can be described as homesickness, for Christmas always was to me a very sentimental holiday. I'm spending the evening listening to carols over the radio and writing this short note to you. One of the best programs so far was a propaganda broadcast in German from the United States with the choir of Riverside Church furnishing the music. Some of the French stations have some excellent music.

I can almost picture you this evening, wrapping last minute presents, tired and sleepy, the dining room table covered with wrapping paper, labels and strings. You have a Christmas
tree this year, I hope, and the lights are burning brightly, lighting the bay window. Perhaps the small kerosene stove is adding a little more heat to the chilly living room. According to the latest weather reports I heard, there should be plenty of snow to make this a really white Christmas. Naturally the radio is going full blast, pouring forth torrents of Christmas music. You can’t imagine how much I miss all of that and much more.

I am still with the 450th, though officially transferred. From what I can see of the set up that “is to be”, I’m really quite fortunate, for though I will be working much harder than I am now, I will be doing something worthwhile. I still have but a vague idea of exactly what I will be doing but the prospects are excellent.

Much of my mail has never yet reached me. Letters are terrifically slow in arriving and packages have also been delayed. Many others are also having the same difficulties so I have the consolation of knowing that I am not alone.

“Lo, a rose eer blooming———” now is being broadcast from England. One of my favorites. We had a bit of snow last evening, but right here it did not last at all. It was wonderful, watching the snow flakes beating down toward the jeep as we drove into the wind.

“Silent Night” being torn to pieces by amateur voices accompanied by a banging piano.

Organ music . . .

Christmas—and all the officers with their guns handy. The contrast is most ironic. Even far from the fighting fronts weapons cannot be discarded. –1944 in the year of the Prince of Peace. And the peoples of the world are still struggling, one against the other.

Another package of food came this evening so I believe that most of them are reaching here—though slowly.

Noel! Noel!

Love,
Son

Letter 292, 1944-12-25

Dear Mother & Dad,

I spent a very quiet Christmas today, but did have a good turkey meal for dinner. Army meals still can’t come up to your standards, however, no matter how hard the cooks try.

There was an interesting item in today’s “Stars & Stripes” concerning Christmas customs in southern France. I’m enclosing it for you to read. I think you will find it interesting, for I bought you a few of the “santons” for you and will get them in the mail in a few days. Save the clipping to keep with the little figures when they arrive.

Believe it or not, I honestly believe I can find my way about more large European cities than I can American ones now. I even know more back roads and byways in Italy & France than I do in Connecticut. When I return home I’ll be moving about with the aid of maps until I can manage to reorientate myself.

When I am sure of my changed address, I would like you to give it to those around home so my mail will reach me without too long an interval. Otherwise it may easily become lost
in the postal circles. You know to whom to give it – Grandma & Ed, Mildred, Morrises, Aunt Onie, Barbara, Phebe, Divy, Martha etc.

If you don’t hear from me for over a period of several days, you can be sure that I am keeping busy. When I first get to my new outfit I know I will be terrifically busy, for I am the only officer that has so far been assigned. That will keep me stepping, for many of the items that will be confronting me will be entirely new. I'll just have to go by the books until I can get some help and hope I am doing the right thing.

The news concerning the Germans drive into Belgium sounds better this evening. It looks as if they are stopped, at least temporarily. I hope it is for good.

I'll try to write soon again.

Love,
Son

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Letter 293, 1944-12-29

V-Mail

Dear Mother & Dad,

If V-Mail arrives as quickly as you say, perhaps you would prefer that I write V-Mail letters exclusively from now on. It would rather be a battle, of course, for I hate to address these darn things, but they probably would arrive more regularly. However, let's wait until the Christmas rush subsides and see what happens.

Some of my birthday cards came tonight. Thanks a lot. I'm glad you didn't forget about it.

I have not seen Francis in several weeks, but when I get settled again I'm sure I'll be able to contact him. He now is working in the post office department of the hospital rather than in the physic therapy ward.

I'm glad that clipping concerning the hospital came OK. Miss Warner (remember I told you I met her in Onan when their hospital was there!) wanted me to see it if I possibly could. I thought you would enjoy seeing it also.

Did you know that Mildred also send me a tree? Her's was of paper, with paper stars for decoration.

Love,
Son

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Letter 294, 1944-12-29

V-Mail

Dear Mother & Dad,

For several days I have not written, simply because I have been getting ready for my new job. I will be located in the same general area where I am now, so the actual movement will not involve much difficulty. However, the usual army red tape and vagueness of orders is
besetting all my actions, trying to slow me up as much as possible and causing the expected
difficulties. Truthfully, right now I know more about my future plans than many others who
are facing similar situations. You see? You can always find some consolation.

The package with the developer and fixative came in fine condition, as did also the one of
nuts, etc. Miss Russell & Miss Tobias also sent a very nice box for Christmas. As yet, Barbara’s
present has never reached me but there is still hope because of the great numbers of Christmas
mail still coming in. Letters also are improving, but the prints of the pictures that the censor
held so long still have not arrived. The ones of Jim & I in Italy came this evening. They were
not too clear, were they? I could tell that would happen by looking at the negatives.

Love,
Son

Letter 295, 1944-12-30 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 29
V-Mail 30 December 1944
Dear Mother & Dad,
   My nicest Christmas gift of all came this evening – your pictures. I really mean it when
   I say that I am most pleased with them than anything else that has been sent. I have been
   waiting a long time, but it has been worth the waiting. They really are fine, aren’t they? You
   both look great, and that is the best of all. What ever gave you the idea you wouldn’t “take”
   well?
   George McLachlan & Sons sent me a box of “Prince Albert” pipe tobacco for which I have
   no use. I’d give it to Hobbie & Stinson or to anyone who can make use of it. It was a nice
   gesture, however, and I appreciate the thought behind it.
   The weather has suddenly become cold here, even reaching the freezing point during the
   night and not warming up much during the day. Almost like some of the cold spells at home.
   I’ll be terribly busy the next few days, so don’t be expecting much mail during that time.
   I’ll send you my change of address shortly.

Love,
Son

Letter 296, 1944-12-31 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 29
V-Mail 31 December 1944
Dear Mother & Dad,
   I’m just taking a few minutes our from my packing this evening to give you my new address,
   beginning tomorrow,
     81st Medical Base Depot Co.
     A.P.O. #772
     c/o P.M. New York, N.Y.

318
will be the correct address.

I'll be practically in the same place, but as is obvious, the A.P.O. changes again. I certainly would appreciate it if you would give this information to any about home that you think might want it – Morris', Mildred, Martha, (thru Aunt Amanda), Barbara, Phebe, Divy, Grandma, Aunt Onie – and of course the newspaper and magazines again.

Two more packages this evening – and me trying to move. They were very nice, however – the fruit cake from Grandma & Barbara's present. Both came in fine condition. I'll write to thank them when I get settled again.

Love,
Son
for a couple of days. And for heaven's sake don't give my address out to the magazines and newspapers until I'm certain. As it is, they probably will never catch up with me. One of these days I'll know for sure. Until then, keep my address to yourself.

I should have written sooner, but I really have been extremely busy. So far, I am the only officer in the company and consequently a great deal of work has fallen on me. Believe it or not, I am even commanding the company right now. However, as soon as some others are assigned they will take over and I will have more free time. Of course, by then much of the difficult work of activation will also be completed and it will be much easier for the one in charge.

Love,
Son

Letter 299, 1945-01-05 (back to Table of Contents)

5 January 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

Well, I guess it is settled. The new A.P.O. is to be 772, so spread the tidings wide. However, I am still in approximately the same place and thus will be able to keep in touch with some of those I left. The other night, when I went back to the old headquarters to get my mail, I arrived just in time to bid Hobbie & Stinson good-bye. They too have been transferred, so I am beginning to feel better about leaving. By now our old room has entirely new inhabitants.

I am living comfortably in my new quarters, even more comfortably than before – springs, mattress and sheets no less. The officers have a home of their own though we eat at the depot with the men. Tonight, as I write this note sitting in a comfortable chair, a fire is blazing in the fireplace and a radio is bringing in the latest programs. Home was never like this. It lacked the fireplace – but had a great deal more to take its place.

I had a most enjoyable evening last night. The officers were invited to dinner with the Italian officers who work at the depot and they really fed us well. The whole meal was made from regular G.I. food, but the Italian cooks camouflaged it so well that it could scarcely resemble anything that came from our kitchens. First, of course, we had heaping plates of spaghetti. Course two – peas & spam (and even the spam tasted good. Course three – French fried potatoes, tiny meat balls of a special Italian construction, and a pie like bread (good description?) with a layer of tomato over the top. For dessert, peas and a pastry that resembles cream puffs. I could scarcely push away from the table.

The package containing parkay's etc. came a couple of nights ago & also a very nice box of cookies from Mildred. Perhaps I'll get to write all my thank you notes now that I have begun to settle down.

I don't remember you writing that David was in Switzerland. When & if David tells you anything about his escape, be sure to write all you can. You know how I like news of that sort. Short tonight.
I want to get off a few V-Mails.

Love,
Son

Letter 300, 1945-01-06 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 30

6 January 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

My life is becoming more & more uneventful. In fact, so much so that I scarcely have any news to contribute in this evening’s (potatoes)-[whoops, sorry: that was just something I heard on the radio]-in this evening’s epistle.

I had two money orders made this afternoon and am enclosing them in this letter. The total amount is for $180.00. I have more to send at a later date, but I did not want to stand in the post office and figure exactly how much to send, all the while clutching a handful of French frames.

I’m sorry I was unable to send you anything for Christmas, but I want you to buy something for yourselves out of the money I am sending now. You can buy it for you as individuals or for both of you together. But I do want you to select something –and tell me what you get. And spend what you wish – not some measly little thing to try to placate me – clothes, furniture, jewelry, or whatever you choose. Thirty, forty, fifty dollars –whatever the cost. I really want you to do this for it will make me feel much better after having neglected you for so long.

I’m still trying to get off some of the many letters I owe and I’m planning to continue tonight.

Love,
Son

Letter 301, 1945-01-11 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 30

11 January 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I wrote a letter the other evening but I fear I burned it in the fireplace with old letters I was destroying. In that note I answered all sorts of questions you had been asking, but right now I have no idea what they were. I even answered your questionnaire (all answers were yes) but that undoubtedly was consumed by the flames also.

A new officer from Bridgeport joined the 81st this afternoon, and so I am no longer in command. That takes a lot of weight and responsibility off me, but I wish he had arrived sooner so I could have had some much needed help in organizing this outfit. The rest of the officers should be putting in an appearance shortly.
When [sic] had a glimpse of New England weather yesterday morning when the area had a thin coating of snow. I really enjoyed seeing real winter weather again even if it did last for only a few hours. Spots of dirty white are still splattered about the city but no other reminders of the storm are left.

The French dictionary and grammar also came recently. Thanks a million. Now perhaps I'll have a few references should I have time to study a little of this Gallic lingue. It will really take some real study if I accomplish anything at all valuable, for it is a complicated tongue.

I had planned to see the world premier of “Rhapsody in Blue” this evening but the theater was packed, even no standing room, so naturally I came home. However, the result of that disappointment is that you are finally getting another few words from my scratchy pen.

We are supposed to have a half a day off a week, but I have been kept so busy that I have never taken mine. Shortly, however, now that I have a cohort, I'll take a few hours for sight seeing and doing a bit of photography.

The pictures of the Gallaghers arrived. Thanks. How about that roll of negatives from Italy? They have never shown themselves here, though I think you wrote that you had them from the photographers late in November. They should be coming through shortly.

Love,
Son

12 January 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

Your Christmas letters and one of January first were awaiting me tonight – some slow – some fast. No matter what the date, it is great to receive mail from you, so keep that pen awritin’.

Perhaps I will write to Albert this evening, for I have been careless in replying and really should drop him at least a note. A Christmas card is all I have sent since I heard from him tow or three months ago.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to write even a sensible letter, let alone an interesting one, now that I am settled in one spot. Previously I could at least describe the change of scenery or some incidents in the new locale, but the present static position has left me plotless. I have heard a rumor to the effect that soon we will be free to reveal our exact location so that may give me a little more energy and inspiration. Then my travelogues of the region will begin again, and you will suffer the accounts of my sightseeing tours. Too bad I am such an inveterate tourist but it all probably is due to the insatiable curiosity I inherited from you.

Undoubtedly you have noticed varying degrees of writing clarity and neatness amongst my sundry ramblings on paper. Much depends on my situation and concentration – Am I balancing the paper on my lap or am I writing on a table? Is the radio attacking my thoughts or is the atmosphere quiet and conducive to thought? (it sounds like whoops from an aboriginal war dance forcing sound out from the grilled loud speaker right now) Is the weather cold or
comfortably warm? And most of all, do I have something to say or am I simply rambling and gibbering? Not difficult to discern in this note, is it?

I may have my horrible physiognomy imprinted on paper one of these thoughtless days. At the PX in town the photographers do some very fine work and I am tempted to see what they can do with me. These Frenchmen perhaps will be able to accomplish some sort of improvement over my native state.

Thanks again for your photos. I truly do appreciate having them. I was a long time convincing you that I really did what [want] them but finally you came through.

Love,
Son

14 January 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

A few more notes slipped by the clutching fingers of the postal clerks today and finally arrived here in southern France. Now I can continue with my photography, for the two rolls sent with the French conversation book also were included in today's loot. Thanks.

I saw Fran Austin a few minutes this afternoon when Lt. Wurtzel and I went out to the 43rd for laundry. He looks fine and seems to enjoy working in the hospital's post office. I imagine I will be seeing him more often now, for he knows exactly where I am located and drives into town here at least once a day. He tried to find me today but only had a minute and couldn't spend the time looking for my office.

Charlie McCarthy is rocking the air waves right now and is not aiding with my concentration. Radio never was conducive to study.

"Gas Light" was at the local cinema last evening. You would really enjoy that movie. The acting & photography is excellent. I forget, though. It probably was in Danbury months ago. If it comes again, try to see it.

Have you changed my address with the newspapers & magazines? I know it will be a terrific shock to them, but someday they will realize that the army doesn't permit a very stationary life. How many times has it been during the past few months?

We live quite a distance from the depot where we work, so every evening we drive to our villas as a means of preventing march fractures and blisters. Gradually I'm getting used to jack knifing my legs behind the steering wheel of a jeep, but at first it was very strange to find a vehicle under my own control again. Our jeep has been winterized, that is, the sides have been fitted with plyboard to keep out the freezing winter winds so driving back and forth is not at all uncomfortable. In fact, I really enjoy the change.

Do get those prints from Italy off to me soon, won't you? I've been looking for them for several weeks now.

No, I have never heard from the Chaplain in regard to the camera case. I'll let you know
as soon as I do. 

Love, 
Son

Letter 304, 1945-01-16 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 30

16 January 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I do wish I could get settled down and stay in one place. Once again I have moved, but this time I am on D.S. (Detached Service) with the Surgeon's Office, so my address stays the same. Also I am living in the same place but am eating at a regular officers' mess in the city. It is very nice, excellent service, fine cuisine, but I would prefer to be with the other group. I am hoping this service will be only temporary for I really think I am just an extra, unnecessary fixture, and could easily be returned to my outfit within a few days.

Another officer joined the 81st today – Lt. Rose from Pennsylvania. I met him just a few minutes ago.

I know you haven't forgotten the performance of “Porgy & Bess” last September in New York. Last evening I saw a movie I'm sure you would enjoy for it contains much of George Gershwin's music. It has not yet been to Danbury, for the world premiere was held here just a few nights ago and I'm positive the old home town doesn't have that high a priority. Watch for “Rhapsody in Blue” and try to get to the local cinema for a showing.

Received a note from Ted Shannon this evening so will write him my latest address. If I can manage to get up to see him he promised to find my food & quarters. I'd like to take him up on that deal but I fear I'm not free to do that.

Mary Anita's conversational French also came as did the films. Thanks a million.

Love, 
Son

Letter 305, 1945-01-17 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 30

17 January 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

The second day at my latest job, and I still am accomplishing practically nothing. The future looks just as barren of useful activity. The colonel of the organization to which the 81st is attached did not want me to leave, and is trying his best to get me relieved from this assignment. I do hope he succeeds. I certainly do.

This life is very easy and probably that is what annoys me most concerning it. You know how I like to keep busy, doing something even if only a bit. For a few days perhaps I might
earn a few cents of my pay, but from then on the prospect is truly dull. Looking after a few prophylactic stations is not my idea of a full time job, despite the havoc venereal disease is capable of accomplishing amongst wayward American boys.

It really is tragic that so much money, effort, and time should be consumed from the all important war effort to worry and care for individuals with venereal disease. The problem is approached from angles of all kinds—moral, recreational, religious, sanitary, monetary, marital, patriotic but none seem to have any material effect on those whose inclinations lead them to escapades d’amour. If for no other reason, those boys who think and talk so earnestly about returning home, should at least realize that all the time, money, and effort consumed in caring for them only lengthens the time of return to the states. A silly, stupid, trite point I am making, but I felt in the mood for that sort of thing. Enough for the subject. Forget it.

Evening 7:30

Just returned from supper. The mess I am eating at now is beyond imagination as you would picture an army dining room. The army has taken over some of the largest restaurants in town and employs the chefs, waiters, bartenders and all to continue operation as in peaceful days. You walk in as in a regular restaurant, check your coat, order a drink at the bar if you are so inclined, and then dine at tables each of which seats four. The muraled & mirrored walls give the scene a most civilian setting as, of course, do the waitresses, major domo and other usual flunkies. G.I. food prepared & served under the touch of French experts usually results in surprisingly fine meals. Tonight we even had ice cream for dessert. Not bad for an epicure of foods, finely fixed.

The last few days have decided me that I am definitely not the type for a smooth desk job. My abilities are not in the line of suave diplomacy, though I can be as unctuous as the rest if I so desire. It just cuts across the grain to try to preserve a false front, or, even if it is not false, to sit and push buttons, as it were. I like to be where things are being done. However, do get the feeling that I have gone too radical in my ideas – I don’t want to return to infantry days. Well, I guess no matter what your job is in the army you are never contented. I know I won’t be.

No mail has yet arrived through my new address, but some should be coming shortly if I have been watching the calendar at all carefully. It was about 18 days ago that I first sent the change, so if the temporary change did not disrupt the mails too much, I should hear from you in a day or two.

Tonight a cold wave moved in on us again when my coat is at the cleaners. I’m managing, though, for Lt. Wurtzel has loaned me a short cold [coat] of his to keep out the cold blasts.

Remember Muriel Supynaoff, one of the leading fairies, in “Iolanthe”? Wurtzel & she are good friends so perhaps I’ll drop her a note in the letter he is writing to his wife this evening.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

Just a short note this evening, for I am hoping to study a few words in French before retiring. Mail from home is really terrible – practically nothing at all reaching here now. I realize, of course, that there is much on the way, but it is being held up on its trans-Atlantic trip.

Lt. Wurtzel had a short coat (regular GI) that I had been wearing since my trench coat went to the cleaners, and tonight I inveigled him into selling it to me for 300 francs. Naturally it isn’t dressy, but it is most satisfactory for what I want. My coat came from the cleaners this evening and they did a fine job considering the terrible condition it was in when it left.

Still on D.S. with the surgeon’s office. I can’t seem to get away.

All our officers have now arrived, but I, this first arrival and activating officer, have to be the one to be away. Well, c’est la guerre. If I must I stay hobnobbing with the upper crust – coffee & cookies at ten in the morning, French restaurants etc. But I would like to be working in supply.

Love,
Son

Letter 307, 1945-01-23 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 30

Dear Mother & Dad,

I thought it was too good to last. I traveled through Africa, Italy & even reached southern France without getting a scar. But now it has happened. Down on the lower right quadrant of my abdomen I have a scar several inches long. Yes, you have guessed it. I was operated on for appendicitis last evening. However, it is very obvious that I am doing well, for I’m able to write this note this evening without any trouble except for the discomfort of remaining on my back. In fact I feel fine, even eating a liquid diet regularly today. Tomorrow I start on soft foods and the day after a regular diet. Not bad, you see.

The attack was very sudden and was the first one I ever remember having. Two nights ago I didn’t sleep a wink for my stomach ached continuously. Yesterday morning I went to the dispensary but the doctor was not sure of the diagnosis and had me return in the afternoon. When he examined me the second time he shipped me off to the hospital. You know the rest. I had a spinal anesthesia & was not sick a bit. To be truthful, I was more worried about being ill after the operation than I was about the operation itself.

Don’t worry. I’m really fine and you can be sure I wouldn’t kid about a thing like that.

Love,
Son
27 January 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

So far I have never heard from Chaplain Newman in regard to the camera case. The last news I heard said that Kenny & the chaplain had made a two week visit to Naples to see the various fellows hospitalized there and has stopped at the first aid station we had on the front – the one I sketched one evening while on C.Q. The town once again was populated, but as yet no one had moved into that building we had used.

Bad luck seems to be dogging the 81st. First, one of our sergeants was hospitalized for a back ailment and is to be sent home. Next, my little mishap. Then, yesterday, Eroh, the company clerk, fell down a whole flight of stairs and is here in the same hospital with me. That should complete the cycle of three.

I heard from Capt DiSario shortly before he sailed, but have never received a bit of news since. In reply to the question about the heavy socks – Yes, I received them.

The villa in which we were living had become overcrowded and consequently we have moved. At first we moved to rooms in the warehouse but that proved very unsatisfactory. Since coming to the hospital we have moved again, this time to a very spacious & comfortable home (according to descriptions I have received) that is almost mansion like. One consolation of being here. I had all my paraphernalia transported for me and that is an accomplishment.

Love,
Son

Letter 309, Thursday or Friday afternoon

Thursday (I guess)

No, Friday afternoon

Dear Mother & Dad,

I haven't written since I first mentioned my appendectomy. Just too lazy, I guess. I was thinking a few minutes ago, what a furor would have been evoked if all this happened at home – people running wildly about for doctors, hospital rooms, & worry (especially on your part). As it was, I simply arrived here in an ambulance without bothering anyone else except to tell them my destination, I was operated on and back in my room in a short time, and undoubtedly will be nearly well before you even hear the first word of my surgical activities. It is just as well that it happened when it did, for certainly it would have caught me some time in the near future and perhaps not in as advantageous position. I'm glad to get it over with.

The hospital is located in what was once an old lady's home here in the city and closely
resembles many of our American hospital buildings. There are three of us in one room so you can see I have semi private quarters. (I arrived just when this particular bed was vacant or otherwise I probably would have been in one of the larger wards.) The usual conveniences are available, so the situation differs little from that found in a private institution in the states – except that I personally am not paying for all the attention I am getting. That will come later when that income tax man forces his foot into the doorway and demands cold cash. Always something dampening every view of army life.

Several letters came yesterday, one dated back as far as November 25. I think I am fairly well up to date now, though I'm sure some are missing. I even received a Danbury paper of the middle of December. However, I was most disappointed in the printing job done on the pictures from Italy. I just can't understand how they get such poor results, for I'm sure the negatives show the pictures to be much more clear. Who is doing that work for you? I feel he really is not doing a very careful job, for some that I had done here showed much, much better results. Well, don't worry about it. I'll have some better copies made when I get home. I realize that it is difficult to get any work of that kind done these days, so I shouldn't complain.

Perhaps this break will give me an opportunity to catch up with my correspondence. It has sunk to a new low level since I joined the 81st.

Love,
Son

Letter 310, 1945-01-29 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 30

American Red Cross

29 January 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I sat up in a chair for a few minutes this morning, so you can see I am recovering rapidly. The doctor took out the stitches yesterday, & now I have only a small bandage covering the incision in place of the wide strips of adhesive that at first swathed my abdomen. I'm eating fairly well now, but naturally my appetite isn't its usual voracious self. I'll be getting back to that box of food before too long, however, and by then I should be ready for another feast.

Two letters came directly to the 81st a day or so ago – one from Mildred & one from Phebe. Yours have yet to put in an appearance.

Lt. Wurtzel told me last evening that I am to be relieved from D.S. with the surgeon's office and again work directly with the 81st, that news was most satisfactory.

Yes, I received the cake from Grandma and I thought I have written that I had received it. Undoubtedly it slipped my mind. Tell her it was the best cake I received and it honestly was that, too.

I hope you understand why I was particularly anxious for you to have that clipping concerning the Christmas customs. Be sure to save it.

Mother, I'm glad to hear that at last you are having your teeth cared for. That should have been done a long time ago.

I'm getting a good variety of foods here, including some items I have missed for a long
time. Ice cream, fruit juices (especially pineapple) and even egg & milk (canned, of course).

When those clay figurines arrive, perhaps you might select one of the medium sized ones for Miss Todd. I think she would appreciate something like that. Have you ever given Mrs. Morris anything?

Thanks for the Valentine greetings. It was very nice of you to think of me, especially so far ahead of the holiday. I fear I never think of these things until the day is almost upon me and then it is too late.

Love,
Son

Letter 311, 1945-01-31 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 30

American Red Cross

31 January 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I was out of bed a good while yesterday and even walked up and down the corridor several times. Naturally I was very sleepy last evening, but I'm ready to go again today. In fact I haven't felt more rested in weeks. I guess this was just the break I needed.

One of your V-mails addressed directly to the 81st came yesterday. I hope the frequent changes from 772 to 758 didn't bewilder you too much.

My French is progressing very slowly, for I've found some novels and have become engrossed in them. Right now I'm reading “Babbit” & “Tristram Shandy,” but I shall not altogether omit my linguistics.

Mother, your [sic] planning to have a set of teeth made right away, aren't you? Don't worry about the cost, but take it out of the money I'm sending home. I'll be sending off some more to you in a few days, for Lt. Rose just came to the hospital and paid me a few minutes ago.

The news of the Russian push really sounds great, doesn't it? Perhaps they will be in Berlin before too many days now. Unfortunately that capture won't necessarily mean the end of the war, but it will be a great move in that direction. Would that it would end soon.

Love,
Son

February, 1945
Letter 312, 1945-02-02 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 31

2 February 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

Starting my fifteenth month overseas. And to think I imagined that I would be home in at
least one year. The prospects of a swift return are most distant, for it wouldn't surprise me if many of us are sent to the CBI (China, Burma, India) theater whenever this one closes. I hope not, but if that happens at least I'll be doing some of the sightseeing I've always dreamed of.

I'm wandering about the hospital now as I were thoroughly well. In fact I don't feel at all ill except for a slight pull in the area of the incision – no pain at all. I expect to be out of here in three or four more days so you can rest assured that my progress is satisfactory.

I can almost read French newspapers now, due to my diligent efforts, of course. The truth is that most items have so many proper names and places that anyone could read them without ever studying French. I do think, though, that occasionally I will buy one of the local papers as an aid to my unexpected spurts of study.

Lt. Wurtzel comes to see me almost every day and brings that various items that I think I need – paper, envelopes, books, shoes, mail, etc. I'm well supplied and can have a regular P.X. ration plus two bottles of coca-cola. Even over here the coke concerns have the concession.

I have never heard from Chaplain Newman regarding the camera case you sent. I wrote to Kenny asking if it had been received but I have not heard from him either. I believe they are still up in the Italian mountains so I presume they are quite busy.

I am really catching up on my correspondence these days. Practically everyone should be hearing from me, (that is everyone whom I owe letters) for this enforced leisure is giving me plenty of time for that sort of thing.

This quiet hospital life gives my little to tell you about. Dull are becoming my letters, even more dull than before if such can be possible.

Love,
Son

Letter 313, 1945-02-04 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 31

Dear Mother & Dad,

For once I must give the army credit. It has not erected signs about the hospital demanding silence, for it apparently realizes the futility of such an attempt. Perhaps you doubt that a hospital is not quiet. It is easy to understand how you could have been misinformed, but if you really believe that you are sadly mistaken. During the daylight hours activities are reasonably peaceful, but at 9:30, when the lights supposedly are extinguished, the gremlins plus the nurses and ward boys begin to display their clamorous abilities. Precisely at the moment you think Morpheus has quieted your ward wrecked nerves, resounding crash like the burst of a mortar shell about a block away opens the performance. Then the acts follow in rapid succession interrupted occasionally by disconcertingly deceptive intervals of relative quiet. I presume these calm moments are interspersed for the purpose of contrast. Some of the din and the cause of the same is distinguishable, but most of it is beyond imagination. Just a few samples – apparently someone delights in rolling bed pans down the stairways – occasionally it sounds as if a body if pushed off the operating table or falls out of bed – windows slam open
and shut all night long – groans – personnel shout at each other from one end of the building to the other – Fibber McGee's closet opens periodically and spews forth its contents – a flat wheeled food cart is dragged, protesting, the length of each long passageway – footsteps, muffled (?), patter (?) up and down halls and stairways – church bells from surrounding buildings of worship unreasonably proclaim their tidings at un Godly hours – occasionally the building shaking roar of nearby ack-ack barrage makes life miserable for the offending enemy pilot and the unoffending hospital patients – a few stray shots from a nervous guard or perhaps an unsatisfied member of the F.F.I. [French Forces of the Interior—the French resistance] adds to the confusion – beds and chairs in the rooms above, announce their presence –finally, in protest you beg for a sleeping tablet to force you to sleep a few fitful hours until some lunatic turns his radio on at 5:30 in the morning. Sh – the patients are trying to sleep. Yaaaaaaao!!!

Tomorrow I am to leave this den of din. I'm well, or so they say, but I'll be taking it easy for a few days even after I am discharged. I really do feel fine, and I shouldn't be taking up a hospital bed.

Yesterday I received several letters, the latest being January 21. Really not bad, you see.
I don't have a shoulder patch now so it looks as if it would be impossible to send you one.
Did you receive the 5th Army patch which I sent?
Apparently I misunderstood you before. Yes, Divvy's guess is correct, and so is yours.
If you can find a nice coffee table why don't you buy that? You seem to be interested in having one that is well made and of simple design. Well, I wouldn't worry, however, for your taste is always good.
The snow you have been writing about sounds really great. Shoveling or no shoveling, I still would like to be home to enjoy it.

Yes, the PX does occasionally handle a few of the items that would serve as souveniers but so far I have seen nothing I would care to buy. I may be able to spend a few days along the Riviera shortly, and if I do I'll try to buy some of the perfume that is made there. I think you might like that.
Occasionally I hear from some of the 350th fellows, thus keeping somewhat in touch with their activities.
Today one of the boys in the 81st is leaving for home for further hospitalization there. He has been having such trouble and of such severity that they feel he should be sent to the states. Of course he is happy about it in some ways but doesn't like the idea of going home as a patient.

Love,
Son

Letter 314, 1945-02-06 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 31

AMERICAN RED CROSS

6 February 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,
Left the hospital yesterday so now you can rest assured that I am well. Of course I get tired
a little more quickly than usual, for that hospital life was really soft, but it won’t be long before I’m back in shape again. I’m expecting to take a seven day convalescent leave shortly, if my request is approved, and that really should build me up – or let me down.

I’ve moved into the villa I told you the others had moved into. I thought the first house we had was great but you can’t imagine this. Here we even have a fireplace in our bed room, plus all the furniture. The main bed is one of those affairs with drapes over the head, a great Roman like main room (pillars, marble floor, fountain like structure in the middle etc.) in which we are to have a dance Saturday evening, a chapel. Well, I’ll draw you a sketch one of these days which will undoubtedly prove a little clearer than my word pictures.

Driving back to the depot yesterday afternoon I saw the after effects of one of those tragic affairs that will plague Europe for years after the war is over. Two children had been playing in some of the cement defenses the Germans had erected here in southern France and set off a powerful booby trap that had been left behind for just these results. I heard the blast from the villa and saw the black smoke but had presumed that the engineers were responsible. I won’t give you any of the gruesome details of the sight of their blasted bodies, but you can well imagine what they were like. You rather expect to see such things when you are along the fighting fronts, but to see them back here and especially amongst civilians and more especially amongst children, they become doubly tragic. It will be a great relief when I can start across any field or go into any building and know it will not explode.

Rambling again, I know, but perhaps the heat from the blazing fire has overheated my brain (?) again.

Love,
Son

Letter 315, 1945-02-09 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 31

9 February 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

Fran was in the office to see me this morning. He had tried to visit me at the hospital but had some difficulty in locating me so he was unable to get down until to today. He is located about fifteen miles from here and apparently has to come in every day after the hospital mail and thus I’ll be expecting to see him more often than heretofore.

I was planning to go on a seven day leave this morning but I couldn’t make train accommodations [sic]. Tomorrow I’ll surely be on my way, that is if the ticket they gave me isn’t a forgery. This really should give me a good rest if I don’t envolve [sic] myself in too much sightseeing. I’ll probably come back more exhausted than I left, but it will be worth it anyway.

Have you heard any further news concerning Richard’s return to the states? That truly was a tough break, but I’m sure he is too level headed to let it get him down.

I have just been rereading the above paragraphs and too late discover that my preoccupation with my limited typing ability has allowed many involved and poor sentences to creep in. Picture me struggling along in one of my seldom found moods of experimentation, and
perhaps you will understand.

Your V-Mail of January 31 came in this evening’s mail so apparently you still have not received my letters telling you about my appendectomy. When you do finally receive word I’ll be running around like mad. Damn, what a mess I’m making of this.

Yesterday, Mr. O’Neil and I spent an hour or so in the afternoon doing a bit of sightseeing about the city. We got some wonderful panoramic views of the whole area from a church high on one of the hills but I’m afraid my camera is too small to pick up much of what we saw.

Enough in this one valiant attempt. There is too much distraction to permit me to concentrate and if I write as much or as descriptive as I would like it might give my location away. Shades of the censors!

Love,
Son
and placed on your waiting plate. They try to anticipate your every wish, and at times a raised
eyebrow or casual glance about the room indicates to them wishes that even you yourself don’t
anticipate. I shall either have to learn to control my gestures and facial contortions or leave
the help neurotic shadows of their former selves – as if I could faze these blasé boys.

I expected the climate here to be much warmer than it is, for the continual sea breeze has
a definite chilling effect. Of course the mountains just north of here do block much of the cold
air that otherwise would blow in from the north. In fact, it truly is so much like spring that the
surrounding farm lands are already under the plow and some trees are this early in the year
dotting the landscape with blossoms. I sound contradictory, don’t I, saying how spring like
it is and yet expecting it to be warmer? I fear I just overestimated the warmth I expected to
find, thinking it might almost be comfortable enough for swimming. Strange, the false ideas
you somehow acquire. It is not difficult to understand, however, why this region has such a
famed reputation for winter vacationing. Compared to the snow, & rain and muck and cold
winds found in the other sections of Europe just now, this truly is a paradise. It well deserves
its reputation.

I've been wondering if the packages I sent shortly after Christmas have arrived. Considering
the speed of mail lately I have my doubts about a quick arrival. I know you will be disappointed
with the bottle of perfume I slipped into one of the packages. I had asked someone to get
some perfume for me and he got this particular “flavor” instead. Don’t think that is to my
taste. I thought I would let you get a whiff of it anyway. This section is (or was) a perfume
manufacturing center, and I’m sure I’ll be able to get something a little more satisfactory here.
I'll do my darndest.

Love,
Son

Letter 317, 1945-02-12 (back to Table of Contents)

Dear Mother & Dad,

These French customs are always interfering with my plans. Today I expected to do my
shopping, but all the stores (or most of them) displayed signs saying “Ferme a Lundi” (or
something meaning closed on Monday) so pickings were meager. I did buy some tiny contain-
ers of solid perfume (in cream form) that I would like you to distribute when they arrive. Of
course select one for yourself, and give the others to Mildred, Miss Todd (and perhaps forget
that little statue I previously suggested that you send), Grandma, Isabel, Martha & Barbara.
Perhaps I'll change the list later, but take it for what it is worth now.

I'm enclosing some cards I bought today showing what this region looks like. The war has
changed it but little, except, of course, the beach umbrellas, swimmers and most of the yachts
are missing. X marks my hotel. (Having a fine time. Wish you were here!)

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

It has been several days since I last wrote, hasn't it? The truth of the matter is that I have been too busy thoroughly enjoying myself to even think about letters. However, I'll take off a few minutes now to at least let you know how I feel. This little vacation has done me a world of good, & I'm really beginning to feel like my old self, again. Yesterday I rented a bicycle and pedaled my legs stiff, but despite the lactic acid I brewed up it was wonderful. I even eased a slight tan out of the unwilling sun – a tan on my face only you can rest assured.

The PX here had pound cans of Whitman's chocolates in this week's rations, so I am stuffing myself sick. About ½ pound to go before I scream for the doctor.

I had hoped to see Maurice Chevalier last evening but there was no room available. It probably was just as well, for the garlic scented patrons that I first contacted summoned violent memories of that evening dad and I went to see “Abie's Irish Rose”. Instead I increased my French vocabulary by about two words by seeing “Anthony Adverse” in French. I know how to say “son” in French, if nothing else – and, of course, “Anthony Adverse”.

Yesterday, mother, I bought you a pottery button (to use as a pin). They seem to be the fashion now and are most expensive, so I bought only a lone one. The pins were even more costly, and not worth the price, so I left them entirely alone. I really think you will enjoy this. It is hand modeled, and then the design glazed with gold on a black background. Very unusual and very nice. Some of the girls have been buying a set of buttons and matching pin but I feel that would look all together too-too something or other to be in good taste. Your problem is how to make the button into a pin – unless you simply sew the button on and let it stay put.

I'm planning to got picture snapping this afternoon even though the sun is not out today. The old section of town has great, “atmospheric” streets that I want to have shots of.

Love,
Son

Dear Mother & Dad,

Came back today from my seven day leave along the Riviera. I had a wonderful time and really began to feel human again. In a regular letter I'll tell you more about my visit, but I'll simply say that the weather was great. Spring has actually come in that section of France – green grass, great sprays of the blooming, yellow mimosa, trees (resembling cherry)
Dear Mother & Dad,

In my V-Mail of the 18th I told you where we were located. Well, don’t you believe it, for we are no longer there. Very unexpectedly we have been transferred to another city, but fortunately our address stays the same. The company had already left when I returned from Cannes, but a jeep & trailer and driver were waiting to drive me up here. They had moved all my junk twice and decided that the third time it was up to me to lug my own stuff. And they knew what they were doing, too, when they left a trailer, for I nearly filled it to the top. The trip was very pleasant, calmly scenic and uneventful except for my nearly getting the jeep and trailer stuck in the narrow dead end streets of an old town I decided to do a bit of sightseeing in along the way. (We dined on tuna fish and saltines plus fruit cake [courtesy of you] at our noon meal. That food does come in handy at times.)

You might begin to send me some more packages of food even though my supply at present is very sufficient. How about some sandwich spread (mayonnaise, pickle, etc mixture) canned frankfurters, jam (raspberry), cheese, cheese spreads, chicken, tuna, etc. etc. You do the selecting.

If they ever put me back in the army after this life, I’ll never be able to stand the shock. For example, I’m living in a hotel (with elevator service), am writing this in bed, have a wash bowl etc of my own in the room, eat at the hotel (French waiters). But why bore you with such mundane details. Just continue picturing me living in those combat conditions I used to write occasionally about in Italy and then you can feel sorry for the tough life I am leading. Otherwise you can rest assured I am progressing comfortably.

The weather here is much cooler than that of the Marseille area but I imagine that even here spring will be creeping in shortly. It is rather a disappointment to leave now that the weather had become so pleasant, but I truly am happy to be here for the conditions of the city seem much more pleasant and sanitary than those we left behind.

My convalescent period & movement here have put me even further behind in my correspondence, but some day I’ll manage to catch up again.

Mail must be slow in reaching you, for so far I have no reply from letters I wrote four weeks ago in the hospital telling about my operation. Well, everything can’t run as we wish.

Love,
Son

20 February 1945
Dad, your picture got a compliment tonight. One officer who saw your picture asked if you were a professor (and he meant it, too). It’s not as bad as you try to pretend, you see.

Love,
Son

Letter 321, 1945-02-22 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 31

Dear Mother & Dad,

I can’t seem to settle down evenings to my letter writing, but I’ll try to finish a short note at least. It will be far from interesting, I am sure, but you will know I am well and still plugging along.

Lt. Rose and I have decided that we will feel better if we get more exercise. Consequently we have been walking the distance between the hotel & the warehouse twice or more during the day, and usually every evening after supper we stroll about the city for an hour or so. Supporters of the MacFadden clan – that’s us.

For heaven’s sake, whenever you give Aunt Grace my address, be sure she copies it correctly. Yesterday I received a card from her, postmarked November 26, with one of the most mixed up addresses I have seen. You can imagine it when you see how long it took (air mail) to reach me.

That was a nice picture of Alice Robinson you sent. She certainly has changed a great deal since I last saw her.

Yes, I received the wrist watch strap. I have written several times saying that, but apparently those letters were waylaid in their travels.

“Gaslight”, I discover, is an old picture and probably was in Danbury months ago. Don’t be looking for it to return in the near future.

One of the Red Cross girls at Cannes gave me some coins – Dutch, Belgian, etc. that I will send off one of these days. You still are collecting coins are you not.

Don’t worry, I’m not completely out of film. In fact I still have several rolls left, but I always like to have plenty on hand—just in case. I took some pictures of Avignon – the bridge of Avignon, you know – but the film broke in the camera and I had to take it out & spoil it, I fear. Perhaps I’ll get back again some day.

Love,
Son

Letter 322, 1945-02-26 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 31

22 February 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I can’t seem to settle down evenings to my letter writing, but I’ll try to finish a short note at least. It will be far from interesting, I am sure, but you will know I am well and still plugging along.

Lt. Rose and I have decided that we will feel better if we get more exercise. Consequently we have been walking the distance between the hotel & the warehouse twice or more during the day, and usually every evening after supper we stroll about the city for an hour or so. Supporters of the MacFadden clan – that’s us.

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Love,
Son

337
Dear Mother & Dad,

Excuses. Always excuses. But I can't help that. We have been so busy getting our company into operation that I just haven't written in several days. I'm really too tired to work tonight but I can't put it off another day or you will begin to worry. I'm running around the warehouse like a madman all day; but when we get settled and scheduled in about a week things will go along smoothly, I feel sure. It is just that the initial work in a new setup is troublesome, especially since this is the first time we have actually been operating on our own. The enlisted men have pitched right in and done a wonderful job. We are truly fortunate in having such a cooperative group. Not one bit of trouble from them in the least.

A mouse has found my food supply. I discovered him a day or two ago upon opening the wardrobe closet door suddenly, surprising him eating the last of my fruit cake. He squeezes into the room under the door – really! – but is too fast for my aging reflexes. He is up and gone before I can even toss a book at him. I have sealed the not canned edibles under a wooden box on the top of the wardrobe, leaving the tin cans & bottles free for his experimenting incisors. He is persistent, though, for he comes back daily. Maybe he is finding something to eat despite all my precautions.

I fear, now that I am settled so comfortably, I will have to move again. Rumor says that we cannot stay at the hotel, but exactly why is not clear. Lt. Wurtzel & Mr. O'Neal have been looking for billets this evening and will continue the hunt tomorrow. It isn't the actual moving that I dislike, it is the repacking of all my accumulated junk, books, food and clothes. Lord, what a job that is.

I have been wearing the sleeveless sweater you sent. It is just the thing under my jacket while working in the warehouse.

For a week now I have received no mail or rather, letters. Tomorrow there surely should be some, for today a paper & two magazines were what I drew. Our recent move apparently is in many ways responsible for the delay.

We expect to have some French working with us so perhaps I'll be able to increase my vocabulary. All my past plans for studying the language have gone awry, but I hope this one progresses successfully. Day by day I add an occasional word, but that way is too slow.

Love,
Son

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26 February 1945

Letter 323, 1945-02-27 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 31

27 February 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

A great stack of letters came today, the latest being the 15th of this month. I was surprised that you had not yet learned why I was hospitalized, for my very first letter in the hospital told all about my operation for appendicitis. Apparently it had been delayed but surely it has
arrived in Danbury by now. You sounded worried about my illness, but you see I am fine now and working harder than before.

A few days ago I included more in my return address than I should have, so do not make any changes in my address though you might feel you should. There was a general misunderstanding about it when we first arrived and I made the same additions the others did. Perhaps the censors noted it and removed the offending words before it left the area. For heaven’s sakes don’t use it or my mail will take longer than ever to arrive.

Two letters from Martha today enclosing some photos of the wedding. They certainly are fine and I was most pleased to receive them. So Chaplain Newman did receive the case? I know he appreciated it; and don’t worry about him enjoying the food, for Captain Singmaster always said the Ch. Before his name stood for chow hound. You can rest assured he liked it.

You were very close in your guesses about my last location so how about this one. What do you say. Lt. Wurtzel says that if you do as well this time he would like you to drop a line to his wife and tell her where you think we are. Would you do that?

Mrs. Herbert Wurtzel
487 Stratfield Road
Bridgeport, Conn.

Lt. Rose had previously met a girl while coming up in this direction during the southern France invasion and tonight we tried to locate her here in town. Naturally she wasn’t at home, but by means of signs, my meager French, her brother, mother, & neighbors, we expect to meet her tomorrow night. She is a schoolteacher, so I guess Walt wanted me to go along for moral & professional support.

Albert Eviths wrote a note saying he had called on you. Miss Todd wrote, Phebe etc. I really got a whale of a lot of mail, but I’m so far behind at my correspondence already. It has become almost impossible to answer all I should.

Love,
Son

28 February 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

This paper that came in a letter today leaves me no alternative but to write. Rose & I went calling tonight but the girl was not at home. However, she did leave a note and he is planning to meet her tomorrow while I continue my hum drum existence.

I did look up Mildred’s friend when I was in Cannes, but she had been transferred to another section of France.

I have really been working hard the last few days getting things in shape. My principle [sic] job is in the shipping department, but since that is not very active at present my extra jobs (charge of carpenter shop, the strong room for storing narcotics & alcohol etc, sanitation) have kept me jumping. Today the sergeant & I spent a good many hours trying to get our kerosene
refrigerators in operation. Unfortunately we left this afternoon before the wicks were trimmed evenly enough for a good blue flame, so I left the items to be kept under refrigeration sitting in the warehouse. It will be cold enough there so they will not spoil, and we surely will get them working well in the morning.

The hotel is becoming rather crowded so Herb (Wurtzel) and I are going to divide up in the same room. He has a much larger room than mine so two beds in his place will not hamper us much.

You might send me some more packages of food. You know, the usual thing — tuna, chicken, peanut butter, cheese spread, sandwich spread, pickles, mustard crackers, melba toast. About Christmas time you included some wonderful tasting, candy like affairs — chocolate with nuts on the outside — that I really enjoyed. Can you manage more of them.

That coat I bought from Herb is just the thing for working in the warehouse. My trench coat would be too long and two likely to get dirty. That was really a wise buy I made when I got that.

Bonsoir,

Love,
Son

March, 1945
Letter 325, 1945-03-03 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 32

3 March 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I've written fewer letters to you during the last couple of weeks since moving to ________ than I have during practically any other period since coming over seas. The reasons are difficult to formulate into any sensible alibi, but it seems to be a combination of hard work, little leisure, weariness, laziness, lack of news. However, I'll scribble away again this evening and see what evolves.

The package containing ink, mustard, dressing, long pecan, rolls of candy etc. came through most quickly. I stuffed myself with the candy before going out this evening. It is really fine. You can begin to send me packages again if you wish — Melba toast, sandwich spreads, cheese, cookies, candy, pickles etc. You know, the usual selection.

I had my hair mauled over this afternoon by one of these French barbers. He did a very nice job of cutting my hair, so I splurged and had a badly needed shampoo as well as "tonic" (it must be liquid gold). Then I paid the bill - $1.40. From now on I wash my hair myself, and use Vaseline hair tonic in preference to these French specialties. Luxuries are nice but not at the present rate of exchange.

I went dancing for a few hours this evening with some friends of Rose's friend. Public dancing of civilians is forbidden in France during the war, but we found a victorola & made use of that. Polkas, waltzes, and all. I really enjoyed myself. Almost like civilian life again.

Your letters have been coming along a little quicker recently, the V-Mail in particular. I'm
glad you finally received word about my operation for I could tell from the tone of your letter that you were worried. Obviously you should not have been.

In Cannes I met a Red Cross worker who gave me a few coins I thought you might enjoy. I'll slip one or two in each letter from now on until you have them all. These are German, Dutch, French etc. etc.

I'm finishing this before breakfast and that fact will account for the changed color of ink in my newly filled pen.

Love,
Son

3 enclosures

Letter 326, 1945-03-07 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 32

7 March 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

My very brief and spasmodic notes to you have been the only letters I have written for over three weeks. I just can't settle down to writing, but I suppose convention and the slackening of incoming mail will eventually force me to become a more conventional correspondent.

Perhaps it is that my travels have been interfering with my notes to my eager public. Yes, I've been off again, but this time on business and for only a day or two. I'm becoming most sophisticated in tossing my meager French at unbelieving hotel personnel, telling them to wake me at 6:15 in the morning, the number of my room, etc., and they understand it, too – after the fourth or fifth slow, distinct repetition (with motions).

On the train today I met a civilian (American) who is traveling about France in connection with his work in the Office of War Information. We had several hours together and thus I learned a great deal about the type of work they are doing in the war effort. He formerly was a professor, is a historian of French history, knows Charles Beard well enough to call him Charlie, speaks French fluently, & had lived in France at various times before the war. I presume that I should be ashamed for not knowing his work, but perhaps the fact that he is not specializing in American history will excuse me somewhat. He told me that just recently he had another book published concerning some period of French history. If you should see a review in any of the papers you might clip it out and send it along to me. His name – Leo Gershoy.

I'm having a wonderful time trying to glimpse as many sights of France as I possibly can from moving vehicles. Much as I would like to stop and thoroughly investigate all there is to see, I have to force myself to pass them by and hope I can return at another time. I tried one of those quick tour jobs in Avignon with a jeep & trailer and got lost in the city in the winding narrow streets. Provence is full of relics of the Roman civilization that flourished here when Rome's empire was flourishing, and I have seen more isolated examples of Roman architecture here in France that I did in all of Italy (exclusive of Rome itself, of course). Often on the train you can find a Frenchman who is willing to point out the points of interest as they whizz by, so I get a passing glimpse, if nothing else. Theaters, aqueducts, triumphal arches, bridges, tombs,
city walls, monuments, arenas, colosseums (or should it be colossea?) all indicate the extent of Rome's early possessions I'm getting a real history course whenever I can manage to travel a bit.

Though all these are extremely interesting, it seems that I often am most impressed upon relearning some fact I already knew. Naturally I knew that many European towns originated at the base of a hill on which a castle had been built, but that clearly was situated in its present location only because the now ruined chateau high on the sharp cliff above had once been a vital protective force for the serfs clustering in their huts below, did I really comprehend that knowledge. That village is still there, changed somewhat but still extremely ancient. Apparently no commercial interests keep it there, no crossroads, no raw materials. It is there simply because it started there hundreds of years ago. Such self discovered spots truly are my favorites in place of those highly ballyhooed in the guide books. I watch for it whenever I go by, just because I enjoy “my” discovery.

The shock of looking in the interior of many of these ancient structures is terrifically hard to take. The exterior is so ancient and indicative of the past that I feel the whole atmosphere of the area should be the same. Then to see a steel bed, a 1945 calendar, a caged canary and ruffled, cottage curtains adorning the inside is almost too anachronistic to bear. Having to live there, they, of course, try to make it as comfortable and as close to their ideal of a home as possible. Looking in as an outsider, it seems to me that they should be museum pieces, still decorated and furnished as in the previous centuries. Intellectually I know the latter is impossible for in many of these towns there would be no place to live if the old structures were vacated. Everything is old. Even we don't heat our colonial homes exclusively with fire places these days. But emotionally, I wish they would keep the old atmosphere, just to give me an intimate picture of what such a life was like. When I see the unartistic, machine processed modern where the artisan created ancient should be, I somehow feel cheated.

Love,
Son

Letter 327, 1945-03-10 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 32

V-Mail 10 March 1945
Dear Mother & Dad,

My letters are extremely scarce these days, for I just don't seem to be writing. I'm slipping off a few lines this noon time, for we are eating at the depot now and thus can squeeze out a few extra minutes. We have moved again to another hotel and it looks as if we will stay there a little more permanently.

Lt. Wurtzel & I are going to the opera this evening to see La Boheme. I'm hoping to hear a few more if I can so manage before the season closes here, for this is a wonderful opportunity to become acquainted with many of the presentations that only New York, Philadelphia and a
few other large cities see regularly in the states.

Love,
Son

Letter 328, 1945-03-08 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 32

8 March 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I have a great pile of unanswered letters here on the bed and as I find something you asked about, I'll jot down the answer.

I. Yes, I received the birthday card from the Committee of 100 Women. I never thanked them.

II. I sent a check recently for $140.

III. Don't worry about the cost of your teeth. Get them made whenever the doctor advises it.

IV. Did you receive the postcards I sent from Cannes?

V. I wear no shoulder patch now.

VI. Jim B. sent me Arundel.

VII. Yes, those candle sticks, the picture of which you enclosed are very nice.

VIII. Both pairs of mittens arrived.

IX. Your metronome? I have no idea.

11 March 1945

Quite an interval, but I have slipped a V-Mail in between. I had the day off and spent most of my time writing letters, almost the first I have written to anyone beside you since leaving the hospital. 14 V-Mails and 2 regular letters so far. That should bring me pretty much up to date.

Another package came today – contents – parley [?] nuts, gum, candies, raisins, cheese, etc. I still well stocked you can rest assured.

The carpenters made me a box today so in the morning I expect to mail you a box of souveniers – perfume (2 metal containers), some coins, solid perfume, a button (Cannes), pin, a heavy French decorative coin. They should arrive in a couple of months.

The trains here are very comfortable, especially those called the “auto-rail” that are diesel propelled. The speed probably has been cut down by heavy war use, but there [sic] rate if very satisfactory. I’ve had several long rides on them now and so am beginning to feel like a veteran traveler.

I have moved again, to another hotel, but still am living most comfortably. We are now eating at a regular mess at the depot and it is a great improvement over our previous meals here. We even have plenty of butter, but, of course, milk is still on the missing list. I’ll have to wait for my return to the states for that.

The climate is still cold, but clear and sunshiny. In a short time it should be warming up
considerably.

Oh yes, saw La Boheme last evening at the local opera. Excellent. Very excellent. The best I have seen since coming to France.

Love,
Son

Letter 329, 1945-03-13
MS026, box: 35 folder: 32

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'll try a note this noon, if I can manage to concentrate with Lt. Rose's exuberant spirits expressing themselves through moaning and whistling “Summer Time”. Yes, he's quieted down a bit, so perhaps I can continue.

Everything is going along fine, with the exception of a slight head cold that has managed to grab me in its bacteriological tentacles. Not too bad, however. I'll crawl in bed early this evening, drink some fruit juices I have in my well stocked larder, and make the usual plans for a long night's rest. Of course, I'll find a magazine to read or a letter to write that will cause the normal deviation from schedule, but even the thoughts of getting well may help. The medical big-wigs still don't know much more about the common cold than I do, so who is to disagree with my mental treatment.

Mrs. Albert Cary wrote a very nice note (one of those church planned affairs, you know), but it wasn't at all trite or stoge, as is the usual namby-pambly, so-called religious missel. She says that Al is in a California hospital being treated for a shoulder injury he received at Bougainville, and that Lloyd Hyatt is with the 1st Army here in France.

I have never told you much about what we are doing at the depot and there is little I can tell. I'm in charge of the shipping department, but so far we have only been receiving items and I consequently have not been busy – doing that. Many of the other odd jobs about the warehouse have fallen into my unwilling hands so rest assured. The devil won't have time to work on me. The strong room in which are stored the security items (alcohol, narcotics, etc.) also is under my bailiwick. Then comes the refrigerators for housing serums, biologicals and other medical items that would spoil in normal temperatures. I too look after that. The carpenter shop (self explanatory, almost) is another of my daily haunts, for all construction and repair is supposed to be under my supervision. Thank heavens we have excellent craftsmen there or we would still be on the first filing cabinet, wondering why the drawers don't fit in the space left for them. My next job was not intentional but somehow my magnetism drew it to me. Repairs of all kind are under the carpenter shop, but not until boxes & packages began to pour in in all stages of disrepair and decomposition did I realize what that involved. Somehow in transit many boxes and packages are broken, torn, crushed and otherwise more or less severely mangled. Arriving in that condition, they cannot be accepted for storage and the carpenter shop cannot hold them until they are revitalized, so ________ I have another section on my hands. If all the items shipped in the container originally are still there, not too many difficulties are involved, but if they have been pilfered as well as broken along the
way they have to be accounted for, repacked, etc. Unfortunately, somewhere along the line, sticky fingered individuals somehow are able to occasionally find articles saleable in the black market and they cannot resist the temptation. How extensive such activities are is hard to say, but we receive enough scattered and loose items to make our work a little more complicated.

I wrote about fifteen V-Mails and three Air-Mails Sunday and feel quite proud of my accomplishments in that respect. Up to then I had been desperately far behind in my correspondence but now I'm a little more at ease in my postal relationships.

Love,
Son
automobile or horse and wagon angles across the street and then another trolley bangs to a
gruudging, half second halt and another troupe of players enters my area of vision.

I read a bitter definition of a French collaborator the other day that I think you would
appreciate having. “A collaborator is anyone who collaborated more than you did.”

Will you send me a jar of paste in one of your future packages? I have been collecting
items to illustrate some of my points in teaching history and I would like to glue them to
sheets of paper similar to those on which I have been recording my notes. Occasionally I get
bursts of energy in respect to my studies but lack of reading material in the field and lack of
uninterrupted study hours prevent any real work. I just dream and hope and accomplish little
or nothing. I've even kept some of the clippings you have sent, for often they have been very
helpful.

I believe I shall try a brief snooze, for this writing business has strained my mental abilities.
More thinking has been involved that I have used in months.

Love,
Son

Letter 331, 1945-03-16 (back to Table of Contents)

16 March 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I returned to work yesterday, but my cold still stays on. I'll just wait for time to cure it, I
guess.

Beginning with the month of March, I am having a $25 bond deducted from my pay. Will
you keep an account of the receipt of these? I'll let you know if and when I make a change.

Mail service is increasingly poor, even air mail coming by slow boat, taking at least a month
to arrive. V-Mail is now received sans envelopes, as a paper conserving measure. V-Mail is
slightly quicker than regular and air mail, but not much.

In a recent letter I asked about paste or glue being sent. Perhaps I can find some in the
stationery stores here, and it won't be necessary to add that much precious weight to the
packages.

I have tickets for the opera Saturday evening, a comedy this time, so I'm expectantly look-
ing forward to that date. I suppose I should go out more often, but the truth of the matter
is I enjoy staying in my room reading and writing. Many of the others at the hotel are out
practically every night of the week, but I would be mad if I set a pace like that. Such activities
interfere with what I really want to do.

Lt. Wurtzel & I were talking about trying to ride over into the Alpine regions some day in
the near future and do a bit of sightseeing. I got a glimpse of the Maritime Alps while along
the Riviera but only of their snow capped peaks far in the distance. If I could get to Grenoble,
even though it is not right in the mountains themselves, it is at the base of them so one can
enjoy their towering majesty without the exertion of strenuous climb.

I just interrupted this note to censor some the fellows' mail. It usually is a most tiresome
task, but occasionally I find a few letters that are excellently well written. One young fellow in particular writes fascinating epistles and I try to get his letters in my pile so I can follow his latest mental peregrinations. Naturally you are not supposed to follow their personal affairs closely, but after reading the same individuals’ mail for weeks you are forced to know him more intimately that you otherwise would. I'm often tempted to add little notes, but that is “verboten,” so I desist!

——— (Evening)

Two Danbury papers was my total haul from today’s mail sack. You would think it would be better than that.

I'm planning to retire early this evening and see if that won’t lick this cold.

I'm learning a few new French words every day from the French we have working with us. The continuous hand shaking that goes on in amongst these people is rather disconcerting, but if I struggle I can remember a bit of what they are saying. Still sentences don’t come, but I'm getting so I can point to objects and say them in this difficult tongue. Just like a baby's first steps.

Love,
Son

Letter 332, 1945-03-18 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 32

18 March 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

Another Sunday morning in my chambre de lit after a Saturday night that lasted into the late hours. Sunshine marking checkered patterns on the wall stabbed my still sleep-heavy eyes this morning rather than the usual swirling fog that seeps into my room before the sun can break through. I've mastered enough vitality to ease out of bed, grab a few sheets of paper and a Fortune magazine on which to write, fill my almost always empty pen, prop myself up in bed and letter out this opening greeting. For how long I can keep up the superhuman effort is difficult to judge, but we Warners never give up without a struggle.

I've begun to wonder if these French women arrange their hair in the modern style of huge mounds of curls & waves rising precipitously from the forehead for artistic reasons; or because they have become so callous in their use of morale destroying sabotage amongst their former Nazi boarders that they are continuing such underground activities unknowingly. At the opera last evening one female did her best. I managed to see well enough, but only after neck cricking contortions that perhaps have deformed me for weeks if not for life. I've ruminated many times about the reasons about styles of hair dressing, and perhaps here I have a plausible theory.

I would enclose the program from last evening's performance were it not that the cover brazenly brags the name of this local metropolis. (Exactly what harm it would cause you to know that I am in ________ is difficult to ascertain, but I must not be a non conformist while in the army.) “Le Barbier de Seville” (The Barber of Seville), last evening's production, was wonderfully enjoyable, especially in that it is a comedy rather than the usual drama that is
so closely associated with the word “opera.” Frankly, I was amazed at how closely Gilbert & Sullivan patterned their works in a very similar style to that of Rossini. Gilbert & Sullivan fan that I am, perhaps that is why I appreciated the barber so much. The similarities are striking. The following characterize both – comedies – exaggerated characters – light, fast tempoed music with bits of lyrical beauty interspersed, - much stage “business” – speech “patter” songs – the use of the chorus – satire of the honest kind – small quartettes, sextettes etc. of the main characters in short but valuable scenes – two forces on the stage at the same time, each loudly proclaiming his individual interpretation of the action with different words and melody line, all interwoven into an exciting number – bits of slapstick – witty dialogue – Not only were the productions similar but many of the stage active were almost identical. The barber was written first, but whether or not the present stage action is he original ___? Based on G. & S. I can’t say. Anyway, both are excellent to my uninitiated sense of appreciation.

Love,
Son

Letter 333, 1945-03-18 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 32

18 March 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

My second greeting today, but this will not be in readiness for the postal authorities at least until tomorrow. I cut some cartoons from the papers I had been saving and wanted to be sure they were included in the next letter – so I’m beginning “the next letter” immediately.

The weather was wonderful today and Lt. Rose, Lt. Wurtzel & I took advantage of the climate and did a bit of sightseeing this afternoon. The cathedral, on a hill high above the town, was our first & brief stop (the distant scene was too hazy for real observation) and we then strayed to a town approximately 24 kilometers from here to get a glimpse of some Roman ruins I had been reading about in the guide book I have handy.

19 March 1945

I’m still amazed at the number of remains still to be seen in France. This particular edifice was a theater built on a steep hillside so it could advantageously use the terrain. Apparently it had remained covered by the accumulated soil until about ten years ago when the work of excavation was accomplished. Most of the marble “veneer” had disappeared during the centuries, except for bits of pillars and carved decorations displayed for the interested, but the brick work which constituted the main part of the construction is in good condition. The passages under the tiers of seats are still well supported by the centuries old masonry. So even a modern audience would have no fear of reaching its seats through these hallways. I snapped a few of my usual shots so perhaps when they are developed and printed my word pictures will be augmented by something a bit more tangible.

I received a note today from Martha, telling me that Jim Birtles is missing. Why did you never tell me about it? Or probably you did and the letters have not yet reached here. I feared
something had happened, for his letters suddenly stopped. I think he had a premonition that something was in the wind, for he wrote that either he was getting increasingly nervous or the flak over the targets was becoming more intense. I hope he was able to parachute to safety. I have a feeling he will come through OK.

Love,
Son

[Several clipped cartoons follow.]

Letter 334, 1945-03-21 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 32

21 March 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

The vernal equinox—and spring is truly here, not only in name but in actuality. For the past few days blue skies and warm sunshine were apparently accurate harbingers of le printemps.

Use only the address on the envelope. Through a misunderstanding I added more to my address than I should and I would like you to correct the mistake, especially amongst those to whom you sent the incorrect information. I have not moved, but I still should not have included all that I did.

A mecca for the local townspeople on these beautiful days is the large park located close by our depot. I have driven through sections of it in the jeep, admiring the scenery, the lake, the animals and whatever else wandered into view, but I regret I can give you no definitive information regarding its history, age, population, flora, fauna, monetary system or similar statistical enumerations. However, I'm sure that any of the army soldiery who have been seeking feminine companionship can add many more and much more interesting descriptive phrases. Unfortunately, I cannot do so.

Lt. Rose is about 24, I believe and comes from Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

What was wrong with Don Thomsen? I wrote a short note to him when I was recuperating in the hospital but so far have had no reply. The latest mail from you has been March 11, which is excellent time except for the fact that many letters before that date are missing.

(Yes, tell grandma to send me the fruit cake), for I really enjoy them, and food, especially home made, will always find a receptive spot in my gastric recesses.

My initial excursion into the difficulties of the French language today was most discouraging. The few words that I imagined I could pronounce are not even up to standard, at least not up to the Parisian level. A French warrant officer at the depot has rashly promised to help me (he speaks excellent English) so tomorrow morning we think we will speak only French to each other. After two sentences I fear I will be finished and find it necessary to resort to signs and writing. I'm willing to try it – once – anyway.

Love,
Son
Letter 335, 1945-03-24 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 32

24 March 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

The Special Service has been very kind to us here. They opened an army movie about two blocks from the hotel where I lay my weary head at night – and during the day if I have the chance – and tonight was the grand premier. I remember your writing how much you have enjoyed Bing Crosby in “Going My Way”, but only now have I finally caught up with a European showing. That truly is an excellent show, one of the best I have seen. When we arrived the theater was absolutely empty but eventually a few joined us before the picture began. Of course, more came in during the showing but it has been a long time since I have had such a selection of seats in any theater.

If and when I see the air mail envelopes you asked about, I surely will get them for you.

My French is progressing too slowly to be a good learning situation. Though I have French all around me, I try to find someone who can speak English and usually am able to find an interpreter. That's the easy way out, but it is also the most convenient when work has to be accomplished. Some day I may build up enough of a reserve vocabulary to try conversation but not yet.

Love,
Son

Letter 336, 1945-03-26 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 32

26 March 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

Occasionally I get a copy of the Paris edition of the Herald Tribune and today I made it a point to do so. I had heard rumors of the Rhine crossing, but not having had a paper on Sunday and being without a radio, I could only surmise on the reliability of the reports. By the time you receive this note a much clearer picture of the situation will have been unfolded, but it certainly looks bright. Let's hope this can bring the European mess to a quick finish.

This paper and envelopes and two magazines constituted the limit of today's mail distribution. This mail situation is bad.

The nearby GI cinema presented the screen version of “Mr. Winkle Goes to War” tonight and it unfortunately is not a very excellent movie. Frankly I enjoyed the news and shorts better than the feature, but I had to sit through it all in order to see the news, etc. which is sandwiched between the two evening performances.

The opera claimed me again last evening. Carmen again, the second time in France, with the same Carmen and Miranda I heard in Marseille. Because of the excellence of the previous operas here I had expected something 'super' and was promptly disappointed. It was a satisfactory performance, but not up to the standard I expected. Perhaps I saw it too soon after the
Dear Mother & Dad,

The European situation has certainly deteriorated into a sad state of affairs when I can find nothing to write about. That is the case now. Patton may be rushing beyond Nuremberg, the German resistance may be crumbling, but still I muddle along with no material for correspondence. I may even become desperate enough to try poetry.

Yesterday afternoon and evening I studied the conjugation of French verbs so intensely that my dreams consisted of multitudes of white French verbs, plus sundry endings, floating about in a black background. And I still dare not speak them aloud.

This afternoon was passed very uneventfully talking, talking, talking. I had expected to perhaps continue my French, but my mind was too dulled by yesterday's concentration. Thus, with intelligence befogged, I expressed my usual inane thoughts to the amazed listeners, and amused myself if no one else.

Lt. Wurtzel is in bed today with a severe migraine headache. He really feels most miserable, but unfortunately there is nothing I can do for him but let time ease his suffering. I brought him home his supper but he could not stomach it. Perhaps a little later his appetite will improve.

Two letters today, postmarked the 7th, and some Times & Newsweeks. Mail is still slow you see.

I appreciated the magazine article about the Mauldin cartoons. In return, I'm enclosing two more from recent “Stars & Stripes” that I think you may appreciate. However, I fear you may be one of the many who do not appreciate his humor. That's perfectly understandable, you know, for without seeing and living through many of the situations depicted it is almost impossible to realize what they truly mean. I'll trust you enjoy them, and if you don't, save them for me for I'll want them when I return home.

Say, I enjoyed that crack about your P.P.D. degree. Very good. But the statement about the picture still goes.

I'm returning the clipping about the 88th for you to keep.

Replying to your question about the Salvation Army, no, I have not seen any signs of that organization here. Only the Red Cross.

No, Mr. O'Neal does not have the same type of work as Mr. Bishop. The “Mr” simply means he is a Warrant Officer, not a commissioned officer. They are not called “Lt” but instead are addressed as “Mr”. Such officers correspond very closely to commissioned officers in the work they do.
Dear Mother & Dad,

Some strange event has occurred in the mail department, for today I received two letters from you dated the 21st of March. That is wonderful time considering the rate at which they have been arriving.

What was Miss Sherwood talking with you about; it must be something ______when she takes time to give your phone a buzz. I wrote to her several months ago but never received a reply. She wasn't offering you excuses was she?

Whenever you stop to see Aunt Mo?, be sure to give her my regards. Has she sold her home in Danbury? She must have some steady source of revenue in order to live as she has been. Well, it will do her good to shake loose a little bit rather than live like a Hetty Green for the rest of her life. Too bad Aunt Alice isn't here to splurge with her. Does Alice Halpine manage to drive over to see her fairly regularly or are her visitors seldom to be seen?

I was down in Francis' direction a couple of weeks ago, but it was a brief visit and on business that kept my time well occupied. The area in which the hospital is located is not very accessible unless one has his own transportation, so I fear I will not be seeing him very often now that we have moved.

Yes, I certainly will appreciate it if you will continue getting any of those pamphlets and booklets that you think I could use. Try to locate a book (really a tome, for it is so large) entitled “The Decline of the West”, by Spiegler. When you find it let me know and perhaps I will request that you send it over to me. Right now I do not want it, but it is a volume that I have always wanted but have never had time to fight my way through. If I can see enough free time in the office, I'll burn the wires with sizzling requests. Otherwise, save it along with the rest of the great collection you have been accumulating, and it will be ready for my return. I still occasionally add a word or two to my thesis (if I can dare attach such a word to the scrape of paper on which I am laboring) but progress is slow, for it is almost impossible to concentrate while living like this. In addition, of course, I'm always caroming off on wild tangents like my present pursuit of the intricacies of the French language – the last mentioned achieving but little success.

Yes, those cans of fruit juices are very nice, but I fear that they would cost you too many ration points. As it is I can't stand how you manage to send me all that you do, so don't worry about items of that sort. I make out very well as it is.

I have two (oops, three) good excuses for closing now. First the sheet of paper is almost done. Next, I am going to the PX for this week's rations. And last, the carpenters are fixing a foot locker for me and I believe they are almost ready for me to take it to the hotel and get it out of their way.

Love,
Son
30 March 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

There was just enough drizzle today to make it one of those days I enjoy wandering through strange places. Hot sunshine is almost too uncomfortable and a downpour naturally is unsatisfactory. There is much of this city that I have not yet explored, and thus, plus the excellent weather, the fact that there was no work for this afternoon, the time was ripe for an hour or so of sightseeing. I had no plan of travel except to make a wide sweep through the town to obtain a generalized picture of its situation and this I accomplished. The modern section was rather busy though its activity was somewhat dampened by the rain. Newsboys hawked that the German western defensive was broken. I toured two of the large squares in the center, admiring the beautiful spring flowers for sale at the flower vendors’ booths and wishing I could buy a bouquet and give them to you. Three boys were kicking a football about, very amateurishly. I tried reading some of the store signs with which I was unfamiliar but deciphered only a few. A scene, similar to that shown so often on postcards showing an ancient church through a medieval archway waylaid me for a few minutes. [Drawing] (Terrible, isn’t it?) In the old section of the city people of all ages were flocking to the Good Friday services being held in the ancient cathedral. I was tempted to go in and then changed my fickle mind. At a corner bookstore (yes, I still prowl through them even in Europe), I made mine a map of the city, a small history of the area, and, in with few, carefully planned sentences, almost convinced the proprietor that I could speak French. I did manage to convey the information that I came from New England. Fifteen minutes of musty odors and other unexplained smells, narrow alleyways, & medieval buildings completed my cursory survey of the old quarter. Another half hour in the new section, looking in store windows and thumbing books in an open air bookstall by the opera house, and my excursion was completed. I wish you could have been along.

I saw an English movie this evening and am writing this brief epistle before retiring. My eyes are heavy, but I hope to add a few new words to my French vocabulary before the lights go out.

Thanks for the Easter cards. As usual I have not sent you any but you know that I am thinking of you. That is what really matters.

Bon nuit.

Love,
Son
strange places. Hot sunshine is almost too uncomfortable and a downpour naturally is unsatisfactory. There is much of this city that I have not yet explored, and thus, plus the excellent weather, the fact that there was no work for this afternoon, the time was ripe for an hour or so of sightseeing. I had no plan of travel except to make a wide sweep through the town to obtain a generalized picture of its situation and this I accomplished. The modern section was rather busy though its activity was somewhat dampened by the rain. Newsboys hawked that the German western offensive was broken. I toured two of the large squares in the center, admiring the beautiful spring flowers for sale at the flower vendors’ booths and wishing I could buy a bouquet and give it to you. Three boys were kicking a football about, very amateurishly. I tried reading some of the stone signs with which I was unfamiliar but deciphered only a few. A scene, similar to that shown so often on postcards showing an ancient church through a medieval archway waylaid me for a few minutes. [Sketch included. (Terrible, isn’t it?). In the old section of the city people of all ages were flocking to the Good Friday services being held in the ancient cathedral. I was tempted to go in and then changed my fickle mind. At a corner bookstore (yes, I still prowl through them even in Europe), I made mine a map of the city, a small history of the area, and, in with few, carefully planned sentences, almost convinced the proprietor that I could speak French. I did manage to convey the information that I came from New England. Fifteen minutes of musty odors and other unexplainable smells, narrow alleyways, & medieval buildings completed my cursory survey of the old quarter. Another half hour in the new section, looking in store windows and thumbing books in an open air bookstall by the opera house, and my excursion was completed. I wish you could have been along.

I saw an English movie this evening and am writing this brief epistle before retiring. My eyes are heavy, but I hope to add a few new words to my French vocabulary before the lights go out.

Thanks for the Easter cards. As usual I have not sent you any but you know I am thinking of you. That is what really matters.

Bon nuit.

Love,
Son

April, 1945
Letter 341, 1945-04-01 (back to Table of Contents)

V-Mail 1 April 1945
Dear Mother and Dad,

Easter day and I am working, or at least am supposed to be. The weather is wonderful, the nicest that we have had in weeks and thus all the prospective Cassanovas are out strolling in the park or sitting in the sidewalk cafes watching the French prospects saunter by. Somehow it was managed that this should be my Sunday for standing by in the depot and thus the Easter finery passes by as I stumble over the keyboard with my awkward fingers. The one condescension that I have made to the day is that rather than appear in my usual OD’s, I have donned my greens. Otherwise it is the same as any other day in the army.

I’m pleased that you drove down to see Mrs. Wurtzel. Herb has not as yet received a letter
from her telling about your visit but he is anxiously waiting to read what she has to say. Yes, you told her correctly. You can tell her that she is wrong. Don’t worry about my not receiving the letters which you wrote with the added information on the address. They have arrived in good order.

I am planning to send another check for one hundred and forty dollars in the very near future so be on the lookout for it and let me know when it arrives. What has been my savings account accumulated be know.? And incidentally, what do you know about income tax for those of us who are overseas. That is something that probably will deplete all the money I have managed to salt away.

I still have never mailed the perfume et al that I promised. When I was packing it away for shipping I discovered that one of the bottles of perfume leaks. When I find another bottle I will send it in it will be on its way.

I fear that this is one of the stupidest letters that you have received in many weeks, but weather like this is not at all conducive to concentration or correspondence. For about two hours I have been intermittently writing this while talking with one of the sergeants who is on duty with me today.

Enough of this chatter today.

Love,
Son
Undoubtedly you have already seen the article describing the storage wall, but only recently have I read that particular item, so it is all new to me. Frankly I think it is a great idea. One more brain storm—that of dividing the bathroom into separate compartments so that three persons can use it simultaneously, one the bathtub, one the toilet, and one the lavatory. I’ll diagram it for you when I put on paper the Warner (revised) home for moderate incomes. Remember, no dining room either, but a dining alcove that is an integral part of the living room. The only problem no is when, where, and with what to build.

No, I’m not anywhere near Ted, at least as far as I know I am not.

Don’t try to explain why you didn’t tell me about Jim. You just didn’t want me to know. Why don’t you come right out and say so.

Your mail is coming through very well now, arriving in about ten days. Thank heavens that terribly slow period seems to be over, for a little while at least.

I’m enclosing a snap shot of this poor patient after his appendectomy. That machine behind me is a tow-motor, used for carrying and lifting boxes. We have similar ones in our depot except that they are slightly smaller. I should have some other shots for you later.

For heaven’s sake don’t worry about my not having enough money. I’m the banker of the group, for I have more than any of the others, and it is to me they turn when their hands are running low. I always have plenty on hand, and if I run short (which is most unlikely), I can get a partial payment any time during the month.

New Yorkers rant about the noise in that fine city. They support anti-noise campaigns, they appropriate money for the suppression of raucous horns and barking canines. But they have never seen “nuthin”. The clamor that prevails in the crossroads outside my hotel room is unbelievable. True, it isn’t continuous, but the sudden contrasts are what make the situations so noticeable. Silence—a roaring trolley car races around the corner to a shuddering halt—silence—hordes of clattering, clanking wooden soled shoes race for the car during the brief interval—silence—the conductor’s shrill whistle announces the preparation for departure—silence—the giant gong clangs repeatedly to clear the track—the trolley rumbles off—silence—another trolley—and the performance is repeated every two minutes, at times variety being added by two trams beating out their boogie-woogie at the same time—a tram blows off a couple of minutes of steam—silence silence—two French vehicles race each other for the scrambling pedestrians, each blowing furiously but neither releasing one bit of pressure from the accelerator—silence—a group of French civilians chatter in their untranslatable gibberish, squealing and shouting with laughter at an even less comprehensible bit of humor—silence—trolley—silence—wooden shoes— silence—truck— silence—noise— silence—noise—silence. Day—night—at any hour. And to complete the picture, let me add this bit. In the early minutes of daylight, a large group (so far they remain unidentified) awakens me with the lustily chorused strains of a so-far-unidentified-but quickly-becoming-familiar song. Every morning they sing—the same song—and with gusto. Can they be part of the group that occasionally stands on the street corner about midnight caroling French melodies and accompanied by an accordion?

Babbling and ramblings suffered for one evening. Tomorrow some more perhaps.

Jai fini. Bon nuit.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

My face, this evening, is red and burning. My eyes are so heavy I'm having difficulty keeping awake. Don't worry. I'm not sick. In fact, I feel great. It simply is an after affect of riding for miles across the French countryside in an open jeep, gawking like a hayseed at the magnificent scenery. Lt. Wurtzel, Rose and I took off a few hours today and took a real sightseeing tour about this section of the world. “Leave me tell you.”

The open countryside is lovely at this season—green, green fields, budding trees and blossoming flowers harbing large fruit crops later this year. France's highways are still in good condition despite the pinch of war, and, though gasoline & vehicles are scarce, the multitudes of bicycle owners make full use of these well marked roads. Sunday is a real holiday here, so thousands were promenading the streets, while thousands more were exercising their legs on the pedals of their bikes, all enjoying the beauties of spring and nature. Many had found branches of the flowering trees to carry back to their homes as reminders of their weekend excursions. A few industrious farmers plodded in their wooden shoes behind their horses pulled plows, but most of these steady workers seemed to be enjoying a holiday also. The weather was great for a long trip, a little too cool perhaps, but otherwise nearly perfect.

You are well acquainted with my penchant for mountainous country, so perhaps you guessed already that we headed for the Alps. As we neared the vicinity of Grenoble, we first drove in the village between the foothills, but, though foothills they were, they still were high enough to have patches of snow still stubbornly clinging there this late in the year. Beautiful, rugged terrain. Then, at Grenoble, you can really see the Alps, their white, snow capped peaks being at times difficult to discern in the clouds that swirled about them. The foothills looked like mountains with patches of snow, the Alps, like snow with patches of mountains. We lunched at Grenoble with a friend Rose accidentally saw standing on the sidewalk as we rode by (Dinner with music, wine and all!). Perhaps we should have explored a bit of the snow clad region nearby, but instead we drove up one of the wide vallies [sic] and admired it from the distance. Though the weather seemed cold to us whizzing along in an open vehicle, it was sufficiently warm for plant life in the sight of all this winter scenery to continue growing luxuriously. From the steep ledges there occasionally appeared a small rushing torrent of water carrying off the snow melting above. In this region, too, the architecture changed radically, becoming the type I had always associated with Alpine country. I won't describe the structures in detail except to speak of a few things I noted. The area (usually triangular in shape) between the level of the ceiling of the top floor and the roof was not sided in. Occasionally grass mats hung there, but otherwise it was exposed completely (!). The roofs of many of the buildings had unusual planes (?) (woops, I'm trying to draw

[sketch drawings of pitched roof houses at bottom of page]

them but I'm not succeeding at all. I'll let my snap shots explain this). The mystery of the day is where all the foot trails leading up into the mountains from the valley go to. The white lines that indicate the trails just stop at certain points with no cause for stopping at all. Perhaps I'll follow one some day and find the answer.
For a time I thought that perhaps we were being received as special guests of the province. For miles, along one of the highways we were traveling, a French policeman was stationed at every cross-road, every intersection, every little village, almost like a guard of honor for a conquering hero. Some would salute smartly as we passed, others peer into our vehicle to see who we were (they didn’t know even after they had peered), others officiously waved us on our way. Every gendarme was surrounded by a knot of curious civilians, &, especially if he was stationed in a town or village, by a fairly large group. Women hung out of windows as our lone jeep sailed by. Pretty girls waved. The male element turned to look. And then we discovered it wasn’t for us at all that these preparations had been so elaborately prepared. A French official (name censored by me because I’m not absolutely sure who it was myself) was following about a half an hour behind us along the same route, and these precautions were arranged to speed his journey and give him the necessary protection. No wonder our American jeep was viewed with such curiosity and little French boys and girls waved so energetically. Ah, what a disappointment!

Before starting back, we decided to take one of the side roads and see if perhaps we might be able to climb at least a little way into the mountains. Fate seemed to have directed us, for we were on a road that climbed up and up into the hills. A surprising number of French civilians were trudging up the serpentine road, many pushing bicycles. One young fellow was walking with a cane, so, being kind hearted, we offered to give him a lift. A girl with him proved to be his wife, so she came along too. That left one girl, (without a bicycle) so she finally piled in also. My French is unbelievably poor, but as we gradually ground up the mountain I learned that they were going to a dance. The road became narrower and steeper until at length we reached a small mountain community hidden away in the heights. A desolate place for a dance, I thought. Something is fishy here. They invited us in, but time was pressing and we began the descent. Then the light dawned. Sure it was a dance, a “black market” dance, if it can be called such. Public dances are forbidden in France during the war, for many feel it is not right to dance while others are dying for their country. Obviously, others don’t agree with this sentiment, for while I’m writing this I’m sure there is a dance being held secretly high in the Alpine foothills. Black market sheets, sugar, coffee, penicillin, books, shoes, meat, bread, and on down the whole list, but this tops them all. People are incomprehensible.

Love,
Son
and otherwise lived a most prodigal life.

The others are planning to go dancing this evening but I'm not in the mood so I guess it will just be a quiet evening at home. I guess I'm just discouraged about the prospects of an early return to Connecticut. When a mood like this descends I prefer to study and read rather than gad about. Perhaps it is because that makes me feel that I am accomplishing something, at least.

I know you are most interested in American stamps, but I have a set of French ones that you may like. If you care for others, let me know.

My letter this afternoon was interrupted by a French lesson from a French warrant officer at the depot. I'm afraid I didn't learn much but at least I had fun imagining that I did.

Did I ever write that two packages came a few days ago? One was candy, easter egg, jelly beans etc., the other a mixture frankfurters, cheese crackers and the like. All very good, thank you.

Are you able to get me any 35mm film. I still have some but I could use more. The last film that was developed did not come out very well, but that must be expected at times, I guess.

I hope to go sightseeing again Sunday if no complications arise. I wish I were free to take off any time I chose but if that were the case I would be going all the time.

Love,
Son

Letter 345, 1945-04-13 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder:33

Dear Mother & Dad,

When this letter reaches you the tragic news of the President's death and its immediate aftermath will be old. However, this morning was the first I had learned of it, so its striking implications are still fresh in my mind. What your reactions are it is difficult to imagine, for I realize that often in such matters as this you disagree with me, but you certainly must admit that it is one of the greatest setbacks we have received during the war. All that I have spoken to in this matter feel practically the same reactions; first, a great feeling of loss; second, desperation when they consider who is to be his successor. Roosevelt's most tragic mistake was to accept Truman as a running mate, and now we will have to suffer through. It is obvious that it was Roosevelt's understanding of historical patterns & his winning personality amongst foreign diplomats that was the hope for winning the peace as well as the war. Now I am not so sure of our success. What does Truman know of such matters? Will Hopkins still be able to have his influence felt? Will Hull be well enough to assert his influence? How much of the postwar plans had Roosevelt explained to his associates? Will they be able to carry them out? I pray that they will, but I'm not at all sure. Not at all sure.

The mail was plentiful today. The backlog of missing letters arriving with a rush. Several from you, also Don Thomson, Mrs. Gattermole, Time, Newsweek and a small package that I presume contains films. Don had jaundice and was hospitalized for several days but is now
back teaching.

With summer coming on its way I've begun to think of swimming once again. I still have the bathing trunks I bought in Italy but I would like an athletic supporter to wear under them. Can you manage to get one off in an eight ounce package? (Size – medium)

Wrong guess about the films. It is a box of candy squares and they are the kind I was asking about. They are really great.

I expect shortly to be giving some lectures and leading discussion groups amongst our men. I am the I & E officer (Information & Education) and luckily the job thus falls on me. I really appreciate being able to do that sort of thing for it is just in my line. Perhaps it will encourage me to do a little more reading in history as we go along.

Love,

Son

Letter 346, 1945-04-14 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder:33

Dear Mother & Dad,

Tonight I am in the unfortunate position of being duty officer for the entire depot (not just the medical section) and am amusing myself by once again attempting to catch up with my correspondence.

No, no pictures yet. I moved from the section where the photography shop was run in conjunction with the P.X. so have not carried out my original plan of assailing you with my physiognomy.

Yes, I'm still in the same section, 1, but occasionally manage to work in a sightseeing trip to other interesting spots in the surrounding territory. The Grenoble section is beautiful but I have not seen enough of it yet to give you an accurate description. The address I sent previously was correct but I simply should not have been using it.

That was a very fine thought to give a lily in memory of your father & brother. I imagine the church was beautifully decorated as usual.

The way the war in Europe is progressing now perhaps I will be home to enjoy some of those vegetables after all. Plant a few extra radishes etc. for me so I won't be disappointed when I catch one of those early returning vessels.

I received a note from Jim today but he never even mentioned one fact of what had happened. In fact, he did not refer to the incident at all, except to say he had not written in quite some days. The nerve of those people to keep such stories away from my hearing.

Did I ever answer in regard to the “Book of the Month”? I've lost the list you included but the two you were tempted to get were excellent. Why not do just that?

So Bill finally got home after all those months overseas. Was he in a particular infantry division or what? I never did learn what he was supposed to be doing, but I don't doubt but what he will have a great deal to tell about.
How about a picture in your new teeth and “hair-do”? Even a snapshot would be fine.

Love,
Son

Tell Mrs. Plancon (Harding Place) that I received her note & wish to thank her through you. Will you do that for me?

Letter 347, 1945-04-20 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder:33

Dear Mother & Dad,

I've been more negligent than usual in my correspondence, but I know you will forgive me even if you don't understand. Perhaps it is the very warm weather that we now are enduring here. You know what that means to me. Or perhaps because my newly assumed job of keeping up with the world, so I can orientate the company, is occupying my time. Or could it just be laziness. Anyway, here I go again.

Tomorrow I'm going sightseeing again with ten of the fellows in the company—a regular organized recreational trip. I know I'll be too tired to scribble off anything tomorrow evening, but Sunday I should be in a letter writing mood for telling of my Alpine experiences.

Yes, after a long delay in receiving no mail it all comes in a rush. Undoubtedly I receive a large proportion of your letters if not practically all. I just forget to tell you when the mail does come in, but occasionally you should discern it when I begin to answer long lists of questions I have assembled from your notes.

Now, as evening draws to a close, the temperature is excellent. I can still dimly see the distant range of hills to the east, but not for long for the sun has already set. The sky is still light but the city is assuming that greyness that means soon night will be upon us. The streets are fairly quiet except for the regular arrival & departures of trolleys in the square below, a few pedestrians and several bicyclists. The rest are probably home at their evening meal.

The park between the hotel & the depot is really lovely. I have to make but a slight detour to walk through it on the way to work, so usually I follow that route. True, there are gravel paths and roads in the area, but much of it has been so planted that it looks not at all artificial. The trees are in clumps, or in rows along the roads, but enough open areas have been left so that a man made design is not evident. Great patches of green grass, a lake large enough for rowing, fishing, etc., occasional statues, benches, a zoo & rock gardens all add to the enjoyment. The French are great people of strolling, promenading so they really appreciate this touch of nature. Sundays & Mondays especially are propitious days for the park walkers and the French throng the path to overflowing. There is one lesson I feel we can take from France, the use of trees along streets and the use of parks. But, of course, our city business men would complain. It might hide a neon sign or a fire sale placard.

I must get ready for tomorrow—camera, film, sunglasses, clothes, shoes, etc. I'll tell you
Dear Mother & Dad,

What a day was yesterday! I came home last night about 8:30, exhausted and ready to fall into bed. For once I had had enough sightseeing to almost knock me out. You can perhaps imagine the distance we covered when I explain that we left with a full tank and some extra gas in cans and just barely made it home, (The vehicle ran out of gas while on the way to refuel this morning), and got glimpses of Switzerland & Italy as well as France on our trip.

The weather was not promising in the morning, but the boys were so anxious to go that I consented. By mid morning the clouds broke enough to convince me that my forecast was wrong, but a short time later, as we drove along the Swiss border, the clouds came together with a bang to prove that my mid morning enthusiasm was misplaced. However, the top was quickly unrolled so little but the scenery was dampened—and our spirits. Then, off and on during the rest of the day, we had rain and sunshine. Many of the highest peaks were cloud capped, but perhaps that made the views even more interesting.

I can’t give you a mile by mile description of the journey, for that would give the censor crews grey hairs, but I’ll tell about a few of the spots I visited. You can imagine the rest.

Of course everyone was anxious to see Switzerland, but I didn’t realize how close we were until a guard, rifle in hand, dashed out from his little guard house as we drove by. Apparently he was taking no chances of us suddenly turning down the frontier crossing he was protecting and slipping into neutral territory. (He need not have worried. I don’t care to be charged with desertion.) Many of the main highways pass directly through Switzerland to the area we were trying to reach and thus we just as often came to dead end roads, that is, dead end to us, for each was guarded. Gradually we detoured about those spots until we were once again in undeniably French territory. For miles the highway skirts the Swiss border with nothing between you and Switzerland but two barbed wire fences about three feet apart, one built by the French and the other by the Swiss), guards, and occasional observation towers. Just how easy it would be to slip across is difficult to discern accurately from such cursory observation, but I feel it might not be too difficult if you planned carefully. David apparently did it and so, presumably, have others. Before the war it is evident that such barriers did not exist for, houses, cafes, garages, etc. that front directly on to the French highway are now closed by the fence in many places being fastened directly to the doors and windows of the buildings. They certainly were built so they could be entered from France. Now they must cross the frontier at prescribed entrances and travel behind the fence to reach their homes.

There is a highway (Route des Alpes) that leads from Thonon on Lake Geneva to Nice on the Riviera and this is considered to be one of the sightseeing roads in Europe. Anyone

Love,
Son

[postcard follows: L’Hotel Nationale, Les Gets]
who appreciates mountainous country would surely agree. Yesterday we drove through the
northern section and, despite the rain, thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. Some from the depot
who had previously been in this section told us of a fine restaurant and it was toward this
we headed. However, after driving over thirty miles and still not coming upon it, I thought
it wise to snatch one of the sandwiches we had brought, for those in the rear of the weapons
carrier were really making them disappear. With the sandwich and cake I felt satisfied and was
content to continue without the meal we had planned; and naturally, you have guessed the
inevitable—we found the restaurant high in the mountains. I’m enclosing a picture, but it does
not give you a good idea of the height, for the hotel is in a little mountain valley between two
peaks. Now listen to the menu: wine, of course, with all French meals (1) preserved meats
that I can’t well describe, some similar to individually smoked slices of beef, others resembling
bologna in form but with a different texture & composition, chicken (I believe) preserved in a
jelly like vinegar sauce and a salad of vegetables (20 egg omelette (3) potatoes in gravy, fresh
lettuce and a tender meat that resembled pork (goat, perhaps?) (3) dessert made of (I guess)
egg whites, wine, etc.? Notice all the question marks? The meats and vegetables had been
preserved, prepared and served in ways with which I am not familiar but apparently is typical
of the French Alps. Price, about 120 francs ($2.20). Probably you wonder about our getting
such a meal in a country that the newspapers describe as being hard pressed for food. Hard
pressed it is, in the cities and well-populated areas, but in the farm sections there seems to
be plenty, (but probably not enough to feed all France). Transportation is so overtaxed that
movement of this food seems impossible, so it’s the same old story of distribution.

What to tell about the scenery I don’t know. Every view, every turn in the road is different,
so I would be writing forever. There is still snow on the peaks and we were high enough to
be in it. Along the highway only patches are left now, but three or four hundred feet up there
were still big fields of white. This particular highway is in fine condition except in a few spots,
but the grades are steep and the turns very sharp. It clings to the sides of the hills, tunnels
through rock and follows level valley land. The architecture is wonderful to my inexperienced
sense of appreciation, or perhaps it was just my enjoyment of seeing the wooden chalet type
structure that I have so long associated with Switzerland. All the streams are torrents, for the
rain storm & the melting snow combined to make them rushing furies. In one narrow valley
it appeared that a landslide had occurred, or at least that is the only explanation I can offer
for the piles of rock that even blocked portions of the highway. Mont Blanc. Did I see it? I
think so, but every mountain that came into view that looked higher than any I had previously
seen I thought was Mont Blanc, so I’m not sure. I selected so many Mont Blancs that even I
became bewildered. That section of the Alps is populated with such an accumulation of sharp,
rugged peaks all seeming terrifically high that one feels dwarfed by their immensity. My chief
disappointment is that I did not have the opportunity to do any hiking or climbing (not by
rope you can be sure) but that will come in good time. Perhaps this summer I’ll manage to
spend a few days there just loafing.

Great numbers of French slave workers are now arriving here after their liberation by the
allied armies. I saw several bus loads this afternoon surrounded by throngs of spectators
listening to their tales of internment. Men, women and children are returning to France. I’d
like to know what they are thinking. None that I saw from the distance looked undernourished
but perhaps those in poor condition have been stopped for rehabilitation somewhere along the
return journey.
Dear Mother & Dad,

I must have left my pen at the depot, for it is among the missing tonight. I hope these pencil scratches will be legible after their long, trans Atlantic voyage.

There is a magnificent rainbow this evening following the miserable rain we had today. When the wet weather comes the warmth really vanishes in a hurry. Tonight I have my room closed and still the dampness seeps in.

Good mail today, several letters and a package. For your identification purposes contents of said package included chicken, tuna, crackers, milky way & round peanut bars. Lt. Wurtzel also received a box and its contents many give you some suggestions – sliced pumpernickel bread & salami (whole section encased in paraffin). Probably the latter costs too many points for I imagine Herb's father, who is in the wholesale butter, cheese etc. business got it from friends. I just had a sandwich before coming upstairs.

Yes, I can drive the towmotors but I seldom do, for we have regularly assigned drivers that can handle the machines much better than I. Did you notice the “forks” in the front. They are for carrying pallets of boxes or for lifting them to any desired height up to approximately ten feet. Saves a lot of back aches you see.

Belated anniversary greetings. As usual I am weeks behind schedule.

No, I did have a copy of that paper Lt. Wurtzel sent to his wife. No, no money belt now. The other wore out and I really don't need one anyway. We can get one can of fruit juice at the PX, every 4 weeks, so you see that is not often. I would appreciate some if it is not too difficult. No, the Hotel de Ville is the city hall! Now you are embarrassed? I really don't intend to stay there.

I imagine Jim came down somewhere in Austria and was trying to escape through Hungary or Roumaniz. I know that previously some of his missions had been over Vienna so perhaps he was in that region again.

“A Song to Remember”? No, I'm afraid I haven't seen that. Last evening I did see “White Cliffs of Dover” a very old movies, but fairly good.

We get three cokes a week at the PX now but, by trading my beer for cokes, I usually total six. Almost one every evening – which isn't bad.

This letter has been little but answering questions but I hope that won't disappoint you too much. Please forgive me for leaving such long intervals between notes but my writing instrument has had its synapses weakened by the French climate. I'll try to improve.

Love,
Son

26 April 1945
29 April 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm very weary this evening, for I have worked all day with scarcely a minute break. However, I simply can't let another day pass with reassuring you that I'm still feeling fine.

The weather during the past few days has not been particularly nice, for it rains spasmodically every day and evening. At present the sun is shining despite the heavily clouded sky, though this afternoon Lt. Rose was drenched while playing golf. See what I mean?

So Germany is fishing about for a peace that will separate Britain & the U.S. from Russia? Undoubtedly an armistice will be reached in the next few days – unconditionally. Even if I am overoptimistic, at least it is an encouraging move for us. I should be heading home sometime during the next year or so, even if it should be via the Pacific.

I'm hoping to get a pass to Paris one of these fine days. Lt. Rose is going soon, but undoubtedly I will be last in the list because of my sojourn in Cannes. Some are even getting furloughs to London, so don't be surprised if you receive a card postmarked there. (It's fun day dreaming anyway.)

My French just isn't. I don't spend any time on the blasted stuff and always call the interpreter when I become involved. If there were no English speaking Frenchmen about I would show some improvement, but as it is, I still mumble a few words in French baby talk & then close up like a clam. I fear I'm not meant to be a linguist.

I have a great stock of letters I should answer but the mood fails to descend. One day I swallow a handful of Vitamin B tablets and a Hershey bar and, with that added energy fuel, scribble off a dozen or so. Until that imaginary day my writing public will be forced to be content with vicarious news via you.

Jim told me a little more of his experiences, but not much. Perhaps he came down near Austria or Jugoslavia. I don't know. Tell him where you think I am, won't you? He might be able to fly up here one of these days, especially if the war should end shortly in this section of the globe. I'll send you his letter at another time.

Short, I know, but little or nothing to gossip about.

Love,
Son

May, 1945

Letter 351, 1945-05-02 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 34
Dear Mother & Dad,

So “The Leader” is dead! At least if radio Berlin can [be] believed in its dying moments, the mighty Hitler has joined his associate Mussolini in another epoch marking conference. (It would be interesting to hear St. Peter’s benevolent words of greeting) Personally, the announcement indicates the possibility of a ruse to spirit the ex-chancellor into seclusion until the fatherland is again ripe for a fling at global domination. But who knows? For once they may be telling the unexpected truth.

Recall the words of praise I had for the warmth of the French spring sunshine? I withdraw my statements unequivocally. Rain, snow, hail, & sleet have been typical manifestations of spring this May. Best of all, the heating system in the hotel has failed to function, so my nights have been spent under the covers in a valiant attempt toward comfort. This evening the radiator is a degree or two warmer, so apparently the energetic, enthusiastic, cooperative French plumbers have returned to their labors. For days they could not come. Then of course they never work Saturdays, Sunday is a day off, Monday all business closes and Tuesday was the “International Workers Day”. Any excuse. Now they are forced to show at least a token attempt. No wonder “slow down” sabotage was so effective here. It was the nationalistic destiny.

Movies this evening, a mystery tale entitle “Laura”. One of the best of its kind I have seen in many months. You might like it.

Is this the type of air mail envelope you requested? I have several. How many, when and where do you want them?

I can’t recall writing that another package of food, including what I believe you called pecan crunch and brownies. The chicken, tuna, etc. I have not yet sampled. Pineapple juice in this week’s PX.

Don’t be too expectant of seeing me in Danbury soon, even if the war should end in the next few days. My job probably will go on for months any way, war or no war, so relax and enjoy the quiet at home occasioned by my enforced absence. Two weeks of my stomping about and perhaps you’ll wish I were off on another sightseeing sojourn. Anyway, I’ll expect so much to eat and of such a variety that all you will see of him will be when I visit the kitchen as both of you slave preparing the next meal – milk, ice cream, strawberry pie, roast beef and roasted potatoes, bacon, lettuce & tomato sandwiches cake – egad! What a gastronomically inclined mind you have, Watson.

I have had my watch repaired at a local jewelers, but now my PX timepiece is in disrepair. If I even can manage to pack off that perfume I have for you I may send it along with that.

Love, Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm on another letter writing spree, so this one to you will be short.

The registered package of films and supporter came yesterday—very fast time. Thanks.

I'm enclosing a couple of shots taken at the depot. Not good, but not bad either.

I wrote that Mrs. Wurtzel said she was very pleased that you came to see her, and she enjoyed your visits immensely. Apparently you never received that letter.


I'm pleased that Mildred was able to get away for a few days. I received a note from her but have not answered it yet. Tell Mrs. Cattermole I received her note and enjoyed hearing from her.

Rain again today and no work this afternoon, so I'm using my pen to its full capacity.

Love,
Son

7 May 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm starting a note for the purposed of including little items I have been planning to tell you and have forgotten. By tomorrow I should have finished.

Please thank Dorothy Lewis, Adelaide Hoyt and Mildred Smith for their letters. I certainly enjoyed them but fear I'll never be able to answer all of them. I just can't write letters and do nothing else. (Also Ethel (White) Osborne)

I'm enclosing a letter from May Sherwood in respect to my teachers certificate. I would like you to keep it for future reference.

Also enclosed a snap of the Roman Theater I wrote you that I had visited several weeks ago. Lt. Wurtzel has some other shots of which I will have copies made.

Rumors! Rumors! Rumors! The war is over! The war is over! Rumors!

I did not go golfing as planned this afternoon, thus the extra letter.

Love,
Son

7 May 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

Well, it's over. And my reaction? Practically none, except that those at the front will be safe from the fighting. Perhaps because I'm so far from the front, probably because the war has been so long, drawn out and there is so much yet to be done in the Pacific, undoubtedly because I see no prospects of returning home in the near future, I'm not even excited. Pleased, of course, but not exuberant. No official announcement has yet been made, but we all know
that for all practical purposes the war is finished. The radio says we can expect word hourly.
The French newspapers print the news as an established fact. The French tricolor decorates
practically every building. The civilians snatched the news sheets from the stands as quickly
as they could deposit their francs. Even the populace has so far shown little of its traditional
emotional outbursts, however, and that is a little difficult to comprehend. Are they waiting
for the sirens to proclaim the official cessation of hostilities or was the war really over for
them weeks ago when their homes were liberated? Everyone seems weary and perhaps a little
pessimistic. There is so much yet to be done.
I’m wondering how the news has been received at home.

Letter 354, Letter from May Sherwood, 1945-03-27 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 34

Letter from May Sherwood, State Teachers College, Danbury, CT March 27, 1945

Dear Truman,

This is a very tardy answer to your letter of January 9. During the interim, I have been
seeking an answer to your problem. Here is the answer:
“Under regulation passed by the State Board of Education some time ago, one year’s mil-
itary service would be recognized for one year’s service toward a permanent teaching certifi-
cate.

Our records indicate Truman Warner concerning whom you make inquiry holds the limited
elementary certificate based upon his degree from the Danbury State Teachers College issued
June 9, 1941 to expire July 1, 1944.

According to his personnel card he taught the entire year 1941-1942 in Brookfield and
from September to November 1942 the following year. Therefore, he would not have quite
three full years service with his military record. Should he return to resume teaching another
year his limited elementary certificate could be extended to cover his employment.”

May I congratulate you both on your promotion and on meritorious reason for it.
Soon you should receive all the college news in the Alumni Letter.
Very sincerely yours,
May Sherwood

Letter 355, Letter from Jimmie, dated 1945-04-16 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 34

April 16, 1945

Dear Trum:

It is evident that you are well on the way to recovery after that appendicitis operation. I
hope they haven’t got you working hard so soon after it, but I guess time enough has passed
so that you are pretty strong again.

I suppose it is needless to ask whether or not you enjoyed your seven days at Nice and
Cannes. Which reminds me—are these army nurses as nice as I’ve heard. You know, you’ve
got quite an advantage there—us ordinary G.I.s can’t even look at them (so it says in the rules).
Well, you can’t get ahead of me—see! I’ve just returned from a seven day leave on Capri. I have multi snapshots to back that statement up. The place is truly a paradise—Everything there from the ruins of Tiberius’ famous villa to the “blue grotto.” If ever I’ve seen a place fit to spend a honeymoon, that is it.

I met a W.A.C. there from Long Island, who is now in Florence. I’m sure going to look that gal up after the war, if I’m lucky enough to be around.

I can’t tell you much about the M.I.A. incident Trum, without getting this letter all hacked up by the censors. I can just give you the bare outlines.

We were shot down, or rather I should say badly crippled over the target. While attempting to make our solitary way to the friendly lines, we were hit by three Nazi sneak fighters (you know the bastards—pardon my French—that wait for easy pickings like us to come along) and we crashed in doubtful territory. We were picked up by the right people and eventually made our way back to Italy—every man on the crew safe. One thing I forgot to mention. We had thrown out most of our ammunition to lighten the load—we needed to get rid of all the weight we could in order to stay up—and the tail gunner just had a few rounds in each gun when the fighters appeared on the scene. He had to sit there and watch them come in knowing he couldn’t waste a shot. I guess he waited until he could almost see the features on the face of the guy in the lead plane, and then he blasted him out of the sky. The other two pulled out of range, circled around a bit, and that’s the last we saw of them.

I have seen a lot of countries that I never expected to see, and I’ve picked up much valuable experience, but I hope I never have to go through anything like that again. It all sounds rather melodramatic, but that’s it.

So there are going to be some little Foxes arriving? Gosh!

Well, I’ll leave you to your thoughts for the present. Keep on writing even if it is only a card.

Jimmie

P.S. Don’t mind the odd sheet of paper—you are liable to find anything in my letters.

Mary had a little swing
It isn’t hard to find
Cause everywhere that Mary goes
The swing is right behind.

7 May 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I’m beginning this note at lunchtime, or rather, just after, and perhaps I’ll have time to finish it before I go for a game of golf. Lt. Rose has persuaded me to go along with him and try, but I am not very enthusiastic; I don’t know a thing about the game, so probably I’ll just walk around while they play.

Saturday it began to clear and yesterday the weather was truly beautiful. I went walking in the old section of the city in the afternoon and once again climbed up to the cathedral. I had worn a sweater and a field jacket, basing my decision on the temperature during the past week,
but obviously that was a false move. The sun was really broiling, so by the time I staggered to the top of the hill I was dripping with perspiration. It was worth it, though. I had read in the guide book that it is possible to see the Alps from where we are stationed, but Sunday was the first day it had been clear enough to see. Far away on the distant horizon, the snow capped peaks could be seen distinctly, resembling white, fleecy clouds bumping into the horizon. Unfortunately Mont Blanc was hidden by a haze, but probably I'll get a glimpse of that before we pull away from here.

I'll send a few more pictures of this section that I had made from negatives of one of the French officers. He really has some excellently planned views, especially those of the park that I am enclosing. (No, I'm not enclosing the park. Just the photos.)

The package containing the cake came in fine time. Thank grandma for me, won't you? At last I'm almost ready to ship off these items I bought at Cannes. Just laxness has hindered me and the fact that one of the perfume containers leaks. I'll just hope it gets through without spilling entirely.

Remember the photograph materials you sent one time? Do you think you could send me some more?

Is the artificial fruit flavoring difficult to obtain? I would like some of that again, and, of course, sugar for sweetening it. Don’t bother to send anchovies for they have never appealed to my plebian taste. Just too salty to satisfy me. Everything else is fine except that you never have sent my “sandwich spread”. I don’t know what else to call it, though it probably does have a more explicit title.

Love,
Son

Letter 357, 1945-05-09 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 34

Dear Mother and Dad,

My whole depot is closed except for a skeleton staff to take any calls that may come in during the day. This afternoon I am on duty at our medical sub-depot and as you can see I am not wasting my time entirely. Everyone is enjoying holiday and period of celebration for the end of hostilities in the European phase of the war, but the enthusiasm seems to be dampened by the thought that there is yet so much to be done in Asia.

We heard Churchill make the official pronouncement of the end of the war, but did not hear Truman’s statements. The French Major at the depot came yesterday all prepared to celebrate the victory in typical French style – a bottle of champagne, so we all toasted Germany’s defeat with that bubbling white wine. Drunk out of glasses, paper cups, cardboard containers, it may have appeared rather incongruous, but we had fine intentions at heart. It was the high point of our celebration, so you can see that our exuberance was not excessive.

The center of the city was thronged last evening with parading civilians, mostly high school aged boys and girls, while the onlookers were of the older generation. Somehow or other it
seemed like a rather juvenile affair staged by individuals who felt that they should put on a show in honor of the war's end but really did not feel much real enthusiasm. The buildings were decorated with French flags, horded sparklers, firecrackers, small flares and rockets occasionally added their din and flash to the night; French songs (poorly sung) attacked our ears; impromptu parades marching in opposite directions meet and become scrambled in the center of the main avenues; ring dances snared unwary onlookers in their centers; jeeps and larger army vehicles, carrying as many as thirty of forty extra passengers became stalled in the thronged thoroughfares. But it still did not seem honest. Something of true feeling was lacking.

Tomorrow I hope to take another little sightseeing trip with Lt. Wurtzel and Rose—that is if the weather stays as nice as it is today. I'll tell you all about it when I return. I want to get in as much gadding about as I can before we leave this part of the country.

I guess that is all for today. I'm really not in the writing mood.

Love,
Son

Letter 358, 1945-05-11 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 34

Dear Mother & Dad,

I wish you could have been with me yesterday. Four of us drove to Lake Annecy, north of Grenoble & Chambery. Annecy (the town), as well as the lake, is one of the most beautiful spots I have so far seen in Europe, a little gem hidden amongst the towering mountains. The town is located at the very northern section of the lake and has been so constructed that the waters seem to be part of the town itself. A great park borders one section of the lake, great shade trees, walks, boat landings, soccer field, tennis courts all adding to the picture. However, it is the panoramic view that you see from the town that makes the locale so magnificent. The mountains descend very sharply to the waters’ edge, making a green tinted bowl in which the azure blue liquid has been captured. To the south east, a rim of snow capped peaks trims the edge of the natural cup, providing a streak of contrast to separate the light blue of the sky from the fuzzy mountain tops. The bright sun shine, gay tinted sail boats, strolling civilians, swimming, the ancient quarter of the town with its chateau, open air cafes—no wonder the French population enjoys its reputation as a lover of leisure.

Riding in the wind always leaves me completely enervated. This morning I am still sleepy, despite a long sleep last night, and my maroon face bears witness that the sun was hot, too hot for my own good. Such relaxation is almost unbearable, like the weariness that attacks one after spending a lazy day at the seaside.

An unusual lethargy has settled upon the medical depot inmates since the fighting in Europe has officially finished. No work. No orders. Just talk about how long it will be before I, and the rest, can convince the usurious war department that sufficient interest on the mortgage has been paid.
When the announcement of the value of the points for discharge were issued, I could just imagine you figuring hopefully the sum of my meritorious activities. As you discovered, they don't add up to anything; but that doesn't matter, for officers aren't included anyway 30 months in the army – 18 months overseas -2 campaign stars that I am certain of – no children under 18 – no decorations: It just doesn't pay to get up some days, does it?

Enough gloom for today.

Your letters of May 1 & 2 came today. Fine time. I have shipped the box containing the perfume – finally. I don't want “The Decline of the West” right away, so forget about it for now.

Try to locate some summer, sun tan shirts for me and send me a couple, if you will please. Also some razor blades and deodorant. I'm also tempted to have you send me the shoes I shipped home from Oklahoma, those with the buckle & strap rather than laces. See how long it will take them to reach me. Well, send them off. I'll wait.

Love,
Son

Letter 359, 1945-05-11
MS026, box: 35 folder: 34

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm enclosing a page from a recent “Stars & Stripes” that you might enjoy. Be sure to buy me a copy of the latest Mauldin book when it is published.

Out of the 85 minimum points necessary for immediate discharge, I have 56, so you can see immediately what my standing is. Obviously there is no intention of releasing combat troops, for as accurately as I can figure it, the 88th, which has been fighting in Italy ever since I left, still has only as many points as I, if they have as many. The same would apply to practically all me in infantry outfits, for, even though their particular division may have been here for many months and earned many campaign stars, the members are usually replacements with only a few stars to their credit, plus a limit number of months' service. One advantage is that they probably will pass thru the U.S. enroute to the Pacific while we stay here or go to the CBI directly. However, I prefer that to returning to combat life again. Perhaps I should have married about three weeks before leaving the states and raised twins. Then I might escape.

Censorship regulations are to be lightened and then, if you wish, I can tell you about some of my experiences, or at least give localities in which I have been stationed. I wonder how accurate you were in your guesses.

Love,
Son

Letter 360, 1945-05-14
MS026, box: 35 folder: 34
Dear Mother and Dad,

Monday morning, still cool but it has begun to grow hot already. The weather in this part of France is terrifically hot already. I’m wondering what it will be like when summer actually puts in any appearance. You well know my aversion for the heat, so obviously I am not at all pleased. The heavy wool clothes that we are still wearing add not a bit to our comfort. It could be worse – I could be in Burma already.

I played tennis yesterday afternoon and discovered that my enforced absence from the courts has not improved my game in the least. In fact I’m just terrible. Lt. Wurtzel and a nurse he had met were playing also, and the odd number made a sensible game impossible, but none of us could play so it didn’t matter.

Lt. Wurtzel received word that the operation which his father had for his eye was unsuccessful and that he is going blind. He is hoping to get home to see him (by aid of the Red Cross) and probably will be able to do so. As the point system now stands, he also has sufficient number of credits to be released from service, so perhaps he may be going home for good.

Four bags of mail were just brought in, so I am sure that there should be plenty for me today. I guess the post office has been celebrating, for practically no mail has been coming through during the last few days. They deserved the vacation.

One box came in the mail – apricot juice (which I drank immediately), tuna melba toast, cheese, sardines. Also two or three letters from the first part of May. It still is slow, you see, but improving.

Ralph B. wrote that he is to study for two months at the school of Military Government, University of Virginia, then too six months at either Princeton, Yale, Harvard, Michigan or Stanford, depending on the area of study. Then he is to go to the Far East in military government of occupied territory. He certainly has been fortunate in the opportunities he has received. I envy him the opportunities for study; Perhaps I’ll have a chance yet, Who knows?

Love,
Son

15 May 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

You can gain some indication of how busy we are when I tell you that today we made ice cream in the refrigerator we have in the depot for storing our biologicals. Somehow the first-sergeant got some powdered mix that only required the addition of water to make it usable, and you know how little urging I needed to be induced to make it immediately. Though the refrigerator is kerosene run, it seems to work almost as well as an electric one, except for the necessity of regular refilling & cleaning the wicks. We mixed it this morning and it was hard
early this afternoon. Almost like home made but not quite. We ate it directly from the trays using spoons or forks, whichever we could scrape up, and it really was delicious. Each of us, for there were only a few on duty today, had a half of a shallow tray. I topped mine off with a bottle of coke which I had chilled also. Yea, man! What a life! But this is only one of the very few that are like this. The next ice cream day undoubtedly will be weeks away.

I have no idea of how long we will be in this set up, but if we stay here I would like to be able to make some refrigerated items occasionally. Can you think of any type of food that can be prepared (and still taste well) by simply adding water? If so, ship them along and I’ll do my best to make them edible.

Lt. Rose is now on leave in Paris but should be back shortly. He has had wonderful weather and I’m sure he is having a great time. He wanted me to go with him, but I could not arrange a leave just now, so it was no soup. I’ll get to go later, I hope, and really “see” Paris, or as much as is possible in three days.

Herb thinks that he probably will be able to get home, at least for a time, to see his father. I imagine he also will be discharged for he has been in the army almost five years. I probably won’t even get home for a leave, though if I had stayed with the 88th there is the possibility I would have. However, that would have meant still being in a combat outfit and I prefer to stay here or go directly to the Pacific rather than be in the infantry again.

Love,
Son

Letter 362, 1945-05-16 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 34

Dear Mother & Dad,

Thank Mrs. Hinkley for the letter she wrote. I have been planning to do so, but I know I’ll never get around to it. It arrived a good time ago.


Kenny sent that film, along with several of his, to the censor for development and it reached me after I came to France. I know he would enjoy these shots.

Sunday

Our letters are no longer under local censorship supervision, but just what we are allowed to say is not definite. I imagine the base censors will be busy scrutinizing masses of letters, for a while at least.

16 May 1945
The prisoners (released from Germany) are still swarming back to their homes in France. Every day many, many bus loads, piled high with the impedimenta they have somehow acquired, pull away from the railroad station near the hotel for the last leg of the journey. I almost envy them.

I wrote Divvy asking her to give you the names of one of two books on secondary education. Perhaps, if she can locate the titles quickly, she will be calling you about them. If you can find them easily I would like you to send them whenever it is convenient.

The mail has been very poor recently, but all the long delayed letters should arrive shortly. Most of them eventually reach here despite unexplained time relapses.

I have accumulated quite a pile of snap shots of which you do not have copies. I'll slip a few into my letters occasionally. Many of them date from my days in Italy, though a few are from France.

Love,

Son

---

Dear Mother & Dad,

I tried to see the movies earlier this evening, but for some unexplained reason there is only one show and thus I'm making practical use of the daylight. One of my occasional letters home.

I believe I have 62 credits now and thus, though a few more than I previously listed, still far from sufficient. To satisfy your curiosity, I'll try to explain.

- Months in service – 30
- Months overseas - 17
- Campaign stgars (3) – 15 [Rome Arno, Northern Appenines, Rhine]

62 – pretty poor

Now you see why I'm not catching the first ship home.

I bought a large, square rayon scarf today that I think you may like. It is not particularly beautiful but at least it is a souvenir.

Lt. Rose left today for a leave at Cannes. I could have gone, but inasmuch as I have already spent seven days there, I prefer to wait for a trip to Paris or perhaps London (if I can manage it). I want to see as much as possible before we leave for Burma or some such horrible spot. Don't begin to worry though – if at all. We very easily could be assigned here, for there is much for us to do.

I've been to the movies – “Dough Girls” – very silly but good entertainment for its kind.

I kept an account of our ocean crossing from Hampton Roads to Casablanca. I'll try to locate it and mail it installments, for it is pages long. I think you might enjoy it, though it has a tendency to be dull.

The weather has grown cool again, a decidedly chilling change from last week's torturing heat. I'm well pleased, you can be sure, though a steady diet of just slightly warmer climate
Mail is terrible. Apparently many of the vessels that were in Atlantic harbors or which were turned back after V-E day were carrying letters for France.

Your guess of Lyon was perfectly correct. It is one of the nicest cities, except Rome, that I have seen overseas. I am hoping that we will be able to stay here but I have my doubts about that. It is too good to be true.

Love,
Son

25 May 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

Several letters today, one as late as the 17th of this month. Most, however, was local mail from fellows in the 88th in Italy and a note from Fran Austin.

The P.X. special for today – One pound boxes of Howard Johnson chocolates! Really fine. We can buy as many cokes as we wish now, drinking them directly from the bottle at the counter. None taken out. U.S. drug store civilization moving in.

I'm enclosing my application for renewal of my driver's license. You're most optimistic if you think I'll be using it this year.

I'm returning the clipping you enclosed concerning the 88th. The Col. Fry mentioned was commander of the 350th when I was still with the division. Perhaps you have noticed that it is he who signed my discharge. I believe he has been promoted to Brig. General now.

Kenneth Vance wrote today that the order for my combat medic badge is on its way through channels in the 88th, so soon I should be hearing from that.

Our meals are improving, especially by the occasional appearance of lettuce and fresh strawberries. Fresh vegetables I miss more than anything else, and this summer I won't be free to rummage through the gardens of deserted farm houses as I did last year. I prefer this present situation nonetheless.

The snapshots taken at grandma's certainly do not do you justice. The sun was too bright in your faces.

You people really seem to be having your troubles – snow – leaking water heaters – rain – dirty cars –

I have some paste so you need to not worry about sending it. Do you think you could send me some larger bottles of mayonnaise or is it difficult to get these days. I fear I'm losing track of rations and ration points etc., except for particular shortages I spasmodically read about in Time. If ever I ask for things that are difficult to obtain simply say so and forget the matter. Otherwise, if I discover you are using a good many points to buy things just for me, I'll stop sending requests.
27 May 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm enclosing some of the envelopes you asked about and will mail more later if you wish. I appreciated the magazine article about deGaulle and have passed it on for some of the French about the depot to read. So far I have not heard what their reaction is, but someone should have an answer shortly.

I am expecting to go to Paris for three days in the middle of June. Three days are short, but I'll see as much as I possibly can. Then, London will come next on my schedule—but that is a most distant possibility.

Have you seen the movie “Wilson”? It was at the depot theater last evening and I enjoyed it so thoroughly that I am thinking seriously of seeing it again. Perhaps some sections of it are not perfectly accurate, or historically correct, or not sufficiently emphasized, but for all around excellence, it will be difficult to beat for a show of its type. If only there were more movies of that kind and caliber for presenting historical subjects. Moving pictures could play such a vital role in education, if the industry could be convinced of their value and would receive sufficient monetary backing. Most movies that are used for pedagogical purposes are really poor despite their fine intentions. Inaccuracy, terrible acting, no continuity, settings and costumes impossible and, worst of all, not interesting. The films for the army have made progress in these respects, but still much more should be done for civilian production along similar lines. “Two Down and One to Go” (which should be shown at home) is tops in army movies for its technical qualities. But how can such things be done for schools when there is no longer a war and the senators worry about offending their constituents by appropriating money for such “nonsense”. Nothing for preventions but millions for the doctors’ bills.

Yes, that is the other kind of sandwich spread I have been asking about. Send it along. Jam, cheese, chicken, tuna, etc. all are good so send what you can.

No matter what you may wish to think to the contrary, the troops that have been here in Europe cannot be released. The Pacific Theater has had nowhere near the supplies and men it needs, because the strategy called for beating Germany first, and much has been diverted here that otherwise would have been sent toward Japan. The lack of facilities, ports, roads, the enormous distances to be covered all demand more men. As much as I want to come home, I'm not blinded to the fact that military necessity demands otherwise. If you think carefully you will see it too.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

We are enjoying a real thunder storm this evening. This rain has been threatening for days now, but previously only showed itself in spasmodic showers. Now it is decidedly pouring.

I am on duty again this evening. My usual outpouring of letters will be the outcome. So far I have penned my thoughts – briefly – to Barbara – Ken Vance (88th Div.) – Jim Gallagher – Harley Warner. I'll also try to finish a note to Richard.

No mail again, for days, probably because so much of the shipping has been diverted to the Pacific. Tomorrow perhaps there will be a bundle.

Send me plenty of that mixture for fruit juice with some sugar if possible. If the weather progressively becomes warmer this summer, I'll need plenty to keep my heat regulatory system in proper working order. My fruit juice the thermostat.

I am just now reading “One World” by Wilkie. Probably you have already read it, but if not, be sure to do so. It is published in the 25¢ Pocketbook series. Very easy but fascinating reading.

I received a letter recently from Mrs. Richard Morrison. Thank her for me, please. It is very nice of the various church members to write, but I find it difficult and very time consuming to try to answer each note. Many times I scarcely know the individuals and really could not write very much in return anyway.

I borrowed from the library here an excellent volume on geography called “Global Geography” by Renner & others. Some time I might like a copy of it, but right now I am including the name only as reference should I want it later.

Still attempting a little history but not accomplishing much. There is some talk about classes, etc. before long, & if that be the case, I am hoping to study secondary education & history & allied subjects. Apparently it is yet in the realm of theory, but something practical should develop soon if the army really plans to carry out its promises. The only teachers for whom they are searching are college instructors except for occasional lectures & discussions with the men in the company.

Love,
Son

31 May 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

I'm on duty again this evening at the depot and thus another letter. I was supposed to have Sunday duty (all day) but the officer who previously was scheduled for tonight asked me to change with him. I would be foolish to refuse, for this ties me down for the evening only, and
I can sleep all night just as I would at the hotel. Your letter of the 23 came this morning, but the intervening ones still are missing. The razor blades were enclosed.

No, no credit for the good conduct medal or the combat medic badge. Anyway, all medical personnel has been described as critical and thus there is little likelihood of my being released no matter how many points I may have. I'll just wait for the war to be over and all the married men and those over 34, etc. etc. to be discharged and then perhaps I will have a chance.

I was planning to have my picture taken in Marseille and when we moved from there I put the idea aside. If and when we return to that city, and I sincerely hope we do not, I will have that done. The picture of George probably is very good in the original, but the newspaper reproduction does not do it justice.

As far as I can imagine, all that vicious talk about Jews and other minorities being released from the army without just cause is just so much bunk. We have several in our outfit and they are not going home any faster than anyone else. Whoever starts those stories has mischief, and plenty of it, in mind, when he does so. I can think of several individuals, and they are not Jews either, who are not in the army and the reason is not apparent to me or to many others. However, lacking proof I don't intend to spread a lot of malicious gossip about them just because I don't like the looks of the situation.

I certainly will be glad when you finally receive your teeth. By the time this reaches you you should have them. You keep repeating that the dentist is ill but never indicate the cause. Was he not in the army or navy for a few months at least?

The French “crisis” in Syria is very interesting. Many have noted during the last few years a growing restlessness amongst the Arab states of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Some feel that eventually, and perhaps that “eventually” may be very soon, they will attempt some sort of federation to bring them back to the high position they at one time held in the world. Turkey has already made vast strides. Perhaps Syria’s move is simply an indication of that restlessness actually beginning to express itself in action. Egypt, another Arab nation, is backing Syria’s moves. Most people forget, if indeed they ever knew, that at one time the civilization of these countries produced some of civilization’s great achievements and kept much of the culture of the early days alive when Europe was lost in the Dark Ages. They are not just a lot of dark skinned Moslems. They are humans with great potentialities. There [sic] importance in the world of the future should not be overlooked.

What is happening at the San Francisco Conference? I have tried in vain to follow the progress of the discussions but either because my mind is losing its acuity or because the news reports are but garbled and scrambled versions of the happenings, I can’t follow the proceedings. Some of the main agreements do stand out, but most of the points of difference do not come through clearly enough for me to obtain a satisfactory understanding. I certainly hope they didn’t fail this time, for the results would be catastrophic. Even if they can reach a temporary agreement it would be better than no plan for cooperation. If we do not work with England and Russia we are lost. If the Russian populace worried as much about the revolutionary effect that our Republican party’s capitalism would have on Russia as we worry about Russia’s Communist party’s socialism would have on us, we all would be crazy. We don’t want their system and they don’t want ours, but either is 100% better than Fascism; so at least we can unite in our opposition to a common political ideology. Or could it be that some of our citizens do fear Communism more than they do Fascism?
Thus endeth today's lesson in social studies.

I have been looking for some suitable souveniers of the country, but everything that is at all decent is unbelievably high priced. I hate to spend so many months here and leave without one tangible remembrance, but unless deflation settles the monetary system shortly, I'll still be salting my francs away to spend when I finally get back to Connecticut.

I was premature in my enthusiasm about Lt. Wurtzel returning home very shortly. It still does not mean that there is not a possibility, but it undoubtedly will not happen as quickly as I at first suspected. His 85 credits should help a great deal however, as well as his father's affliction.

The cherry season is in full blast here in France now and our mess is profiting by the crop. Quite regularly we have that fruit for dessert, but in flavor that cannot compare with the ones we are acquainted with at home. They closely resemble the maraschino cherries in that the pulp is not very juicy and lacks the tart flavor which I associate with the fruit.

Enough of my babblings for tonight. Sweet dreams.

Love,
Son

June, 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I am really too sleepy tonight to write, but I have so much to say that I should begin at least. I doubt that I will finish. Tomorrow I will be busy (for a change) and tomorrow night I'm planning to hear a concert. Well booked in advance, you see. I must do it now.

Two packages today. My shoes! In such unbelievably quick time. Also photographic material & food. Already I have gorged myself with almost the entire jar of sandwich spread, but there is plenty of other food left. Now, for a request. Fruit juice powder of course. Also, if possible a can of powdered milk (some times marketed under the trade name of Klim) to add to the Nestles to make cold chocolate. Nestles is fine, hot, with water but when used with water and served cold it needs something else. I think the powdered milk would help. Also more sandwich spread and Saltines, si vous plait.

Two Danbury papers also came today, May 16 and May 23. Excellent time!

Did you ever receive the box containing the perfume? I expect to send another box shortly, as well as a first class package containing my watches. It is almost impossible to have them repaired well here. I tried and the results were not satisfactory. For the box, or boxes, to be sent shortly, the contents will be something like this: wooden shoes, bought from a dealer here in Lyon. They are not made for souvenir purposes but for use. I believe they will fit you, mother, but I have no way of testing. Even here in the city I understand they are often worn in the house, though seldom seen on the street. Great numbers of the shoes that practically all wear have wooden soles, though the tops are of leather or cloth, and thus are easily disguised.
except for the still legged walk of the wearer and the clatter on the pavement. To make the
complete wooden shoe more comfortable, they are sometimes padded with straw. A strap
of leather, fastened to the shoe under the arch and crossing over the top, makes it possible to
keep the clogs on. These particular sabots also have a simple design carved on the front. Many
of the shoes are painted, but I am leaving these in their natural state (2) Two wooden boxes I
bought today in the Alps (3) Two pins designed with the coat of arms of two sections of France
94) a small bell similar to those worn around the neck of the goats that scramble about the
Alpine hillsides (5) the scarf I mentioned in a previous letter (6) Anything else I happen to
find in the meantime.

Don’t worry about the shirts if you are having difficulty in locating them. Lt. Wurtzel had
two new ones that were too small for him and I bought them. If you have sent two also, that
is perfectly OK.

I would like to go into detail about today’s trip, but I am very weary and I’m not sure about
my eyes remaining open long enough. Lt. Wurtzel & I (the other officer whom we expected
to go with us couldn’t be found this morning) headed for Grenoble and then continued on up
into the Alps through Le Bourg d’Osians and La Grave as far as Col du Lautaret on the road to
Briancon. Returning we followed approximately the same route. We carried part of a 10 in 1
ration, and ate that along with my can of frankfurters (heated over a hold in the ground into
which I had thrown a little gasoline plus a lighted match). The weather was wonderful, food
sufficient, plenty of gas, good roads, What more could you want? I chose the route and I don’t
think Herb will ever forgive me. I thought it was tops, and still do, but he is not convinced.
You know how much I enjoy mountainous country, not matter how rugged or barren it may be.
Apparently he isn’t quite as enthusiastic. Most of the distance from Grenoble west followed the
route which the Romanche River has carved through the yielding portions of the mountains.
As long as possible the highway parallels the river, deep in the bottom of the gorge it has worn.
The mountains on both sides of this young valley rise abruptly to their peaks. The valley floor
in spots is a jumbled pile of boulders that some time previously had crashed down from a
frost weakened ledge, gray, dirty rocks that have no beauty save their massiveness. Squashed
also into narrow river path are several hydroelectric plants, electroplating & metallurgical
factories, all run by harnessing the rushing mountain stream. Even in the lower valley you
can pick out spots of snow that remain because of their shaded position. The few villages
along the way are very small, for there is but little level ground favoring communal building.
The road continuously climbs. Herb was not particularly anxious to go on up very far, but I
persuaded him to go as far as Col du Lautaret, telling him it was something I wanted to see.
Often the road tunneled along the edge of the mountain, the longest underground passage
measuring approximately 750 meters, each tunnel being dimly lighted by electricity. I was
thrilled with all I was seeing, but Herb kept scoffing at my enthusiasm asking what I saw in
this jumble of rocks. I must admit it really was not beautiful, but instead rather awe inspiring.
The lower valley saw the hillsides covered with trees, but as we climbed they grew absolutely
barren. Nothing but rock masses and rock slides and beautiful waterfalls and cascades falling
from the tops of the cliffs. Too, I enjoyed my first close up view of glaciers on Mont-de-Lans
& de la Girase. The lower extremities, where they disappear into rock, look like piles of dirty
snow. The upper sections which feed the slow summer movement are masses of billowy white
creased by jutting ridges of rock. Slowly we wound up until it seemed that we were almost as
high as the glaciers across the valley. Then we reached the pasture lands used for feeding the
herds of cattle during the summer—smooth, grassy fields above the barren area below. This at a height of 2057 meters (you change it to feet).

Love, Son

Letter 369, 1945-07-07 (perhaps June) (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 35

7 July 1945

[perhaps 7 June as letter is in June 1945 file folder]
Dear Mother and Dad,

Yesterday I sent a PTA for one hundred and sixty dollars. You should be expecting in a few days after receiving this note. Today I sent by first class mail both of my wrist watches to be repaired. Send one of them back by first class as soon as Harold can get it fixed. I would prefer to have the old stand by. Send the other one when it is convenient.

I'm preparing the box I wrote about the other evening, except that I have added two more pairs of sabots. Just whom they are for I have not decided, but perhaps they will serve as the souveniers that Frank and Sumner asked about. I did think of giving Grandma a pair but I think that she will enjoy the perfume much more.

The linguistic problem now has grown all out of proportion. I did not mind in Italy trying to learn a sufficient number of words to ask for corn, tomatoes and onions. In France I have made various half-hearted attempts to acquire a least a rudimentary knowledge of the tongue. In fact I had become so successful that I could ask for practically anything that was likely to be served at our mess and even ask for an “encore”. But now they have pulled a fast one. It's German that is haunting my dreams these nights, for now German P.W.'s have been substituted for the pretty French waitresses that used to serve our tables. The mess officer has tried by printing a menu in both English and German to remedy the situation, but my usable vocabulary is now limited to Ya, nien, allis, and wasser. If an unexpected incident displays its ugly head the PW's have the upper hand, not because they are a master race but simply because they have the food and all I can do is stupidly point at a menu or the desired item if it happens to be in the vicinity. Usually I win if I can spare the time for sparring, but the ordeal is most weakening.

Monday and Tuesday I attended two very fine concerts presented by the orchestra of the Paris Conservatory of Music directed by Munch. The first evening I sat in the top gallery in the center of the city. All was well done, though I was not particularly appreciative of the modern French works. Francks D Minor Symphon and Beethoven's 5th were the main attractions. Beautifully played.

The mail situation is very poor. No reasons have been forthcoming for the delay.

You can send more fruit juice powder any time it is convenient. It really does not go very far when you get as thirsty as I seem to.

The pictures you took at the beach came out very well. I expect to be sending a good many of my prints home shortly, for I am acquiring an unwieldy number. Perhaps it would be wiser to send the negatives gradually by air mail.
I wrote a note to Richard, addressing it to the hospital, and thus he probably will not receive it for some time. When you see him tell him that I was asking about him and send my best wishes.

I'm surprised that the Woods did not want to keep their copy of Mauldin's book but am pleased that they gave it to you. Perhaps it is not what I expect but if it is I certainly want to keep a copy. As I wrote previously, those who have not been over here and actually seen what is being portrayed unfortunately do not realize what excellent bits of cartooning they are. They tell the story better than hundreds of news items can ever hope to.

I still cannot make sense of the recent happenings at San Francisco. What do you say?

It is almost time to try out my meagre German at supper time. I'll progress I suppose but I'm not much interested.

Love,
Son

10 June 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

Another quiet Sunday. I didn’t awaken until the middle of the morning and then spent the rest of the hours before lunch sorting the usual junk I somehow always manage to accumulate. Dinner was roast chicken, lettuce, cranberry sauce, dressing, cocoa, bread & butter. Really very fine. For supper tonight we had excellent potato salad, a sandwich loaf salad, cheese, lemonade, bread and butter. The best potato salad I have had since home.

Now, a request I would like a padlock for securing my foot locker! Can you get me one of some kind?

Mildred sent me another package which came yesterday – turkey, crackers, candy etc. Very thoughtful of her.

Two letters of June 3 came today. Many in between are missing.

“Time” still persists in sending my magazines to the 450th. Will you write again and ask them to change it?

I wrote a very sketchy account of my trip from Virginia to Casablanca, and have been saving it to send when conditions permitted. I put the sheets in several envelopes today and will ship them off shortly, so don't be too surprised at the sudden influx of mail.

Another brief trip this afternoon, this one to a small town called Perouges located about twenty miles from Lyon. It is chiefly interesting as a specimen of a medieval town that has not been modernized. Apparently the village was allowed to fall into ruin and has only recently begun to be restored, though some of the homes probably have served their purpose continuously since the early days. It is not a walled city, but is so constructed that the buildings around the city’s edge form a protective circle that is a wall all but in name. Even the church is fortified with thick walls and tiny windows. Notice the

[Sketch of a circle of buildings with the church at the west end]

primitive drawing I began? It was intended to clarify the word picture, but I rather have
my doubts about that. The openings of the buildings towards the outside of the circle are mere slits to permit the weapons to be fired. The streets proper are but twisting alleyways, but, unlike the remnants of the early days still remaining in the larger towns, are still in their original, unpaved condition. Some buildings have been restored, but others are merely roofless skeletons decorated with weed infested floors. Some of these ruins still have evidences of their former liveability—fireplaces, wood working, stone archways etc. standing yet as reminders of the past. At first I wondered why this particular spot should be selected as a fine example of the medieval city. Then slowly it dawned. Other cities have made changes and improvements as the years progressed. This one, fallen into decay, was not so disturbed and thus remains more like its original form than countless others. A poor travelogue? Yes, I know. I'll try better at another time. I just re-read these scribblings myself and they don't mean much to me, either. I'll send some postcards in my next package.

Love,
Son

11 June 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

Tomorrow I'm expecting to take some of the fellows on another trip up towards the Alps. No one has any definite idea of how long we will remain here in Lyon, so I thought it wise to work in another sightseeing trip before it is too late. I wouldn't be at all surprised if we were sent to the Pacific very shortly. If we are to go, I hope it will be soon, for if we arrive late we may receive a much less pleasant assignment than we otherwise would. If we remain here while the other organizations are being outfitted, we may be assigned to one of them. I prefer to stay with this group if I can. Well, enough for wishing and dreaming.

The weather is fine here again, warm sunshine but not too hot to be uncomfortable. It is much cooler now than it was a month ago. I simply don't understand this weather and climate.

I imagine that by now you have seen Jim and learned all about his experiences when he was shot down. He should be free to tell you all about it now that the war is over, but probably he will not say much anyway. If he tells you what he thinks his future plans may be, be sure to let me know. I feel that after training he will be destined for the Pacific along with the rest of us.

I really have nothing to write about (as you have no doubt observed), so I'll stop now and perhaps add a few words later.

Love,
Son

Letter 371, 1945-06-15 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 35
15 June 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

The trip to the Alps was not very successful. By the time we reached Chambery the radiator was functioning so badly (T. 220°) that we stopped to have it repaired. We diagnosed the trouble as originating in the pump, and with that replaced we planned a leisurely return jaunt. The return was leisurely alright, but because of necessity. Every few miles we stopped at one of the pumps along the village streets, filled a 5 gallon can and subsequently emptied it into the boiling radiator. That, with the fact that the engine would scarcely turn over on a slight pull, reined our speed. Otherwise the visit was uneventful. Many of the boys in the group had never been up into the Alps and I was truly disappointed to bring them close enough to see the snow covered tops clearly and then be forced to turn around.

Tomorrow that long awaited Paris trip is scheduled. To be accurate, I leave about three Sunday morning, but officially I leav Saturday. I'll never forgive the character that planned a train to arrive here at such an ungodly hour. Three in the morning. And no taxi service or trolley cars. I am to meet our interpreter there with the expectation of being shown a good time. I'll write you the details.

All the company with the exception of myself and three sergeants are returning to Marseilles. We are the rearguard troops, fighting a delaying action in closing the depot here in Lyon. I'm really fortunate in staying behind for Lyon is one of the pleasantest cities I have seen in Europe. We truly could not have had a better set up than we have had in this city. You could never imagine the army to be like this—little work, comfortable living, in the center of a city, fine climate, beautiful scenery. What a life.

No mail, that is letters, but another package today—crackers, tuna, salmon spread etc. Very nice. Thanks a million. What could be happening to the rest of the mail. None for days, now.

Love,
Son

21 June 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

My three day spree in Paris is over and at last I'm back in Lyon, tired but very pleased with my visit. I reached here about five this morning after riding for twelve hours on a very crowded chemin de fer (train, to you), eating K Rations, drinking tomato juice in lieu of water (the juice was in this weeks PX ration which I bought in Paris), constantly brushing off the cinders that rolled in through the opened windows of the car, and trying to sleep crowded like sheep in a pen. The lieutenants were supposed to ride second class, but after a few miles the others with whom I had spent my leave in Paris found places for the rest of us underlings in the more comfortable first class coaches and it was thus that I completed my sojourn.
Paris is extremely crowded these days. In fact there are so many foreign troops visiting this center of France that it appears almost to be a military city rather than the home of civilians. Traffic is bad despite the fact that a great proportion of the pre-war civilian vehicles were confiscated by the Germans or are now dead lined because of the lack and expense of gasoline. The subways and the sidewalks are thronged.

All four of us officers from the DBS [Depot Battalion S?] area on leave together stayed in the same room at the Red Cross Independence Club facing the Place de Concorde in the heart of the city. I had never known the others before (Capt. Pederson, Capt. Forbes, and Lt. Ohmsman), but they were very pleasant company, and together we had a fine time seeing the sights.

You will recall that I had planned to visit our depot interpreter whose home is in Paris. On Monday, the Parisian population went hog wild in celebration of the anniversary of de Gaulle’s call to arms and the streets were so packed [with] celebrating Frenchmen that it was virtually impossible to move from one section of the city to the other. Monday was the last day of Pourchet’s leave and thus the only time I could meet him; consequently I did not do so. I expected to meet him in front of my hotel and that spot proved to be only a few hundred yards from the reviewing stand. He finally managed to work his way there through the masses of humanity, but somehow or other I failed to see him. He was almost an hour late and I had already given him up as lost, so I fear that I did not keep close enough tabs on the lobby. I’m sorry I missed him, especially now that I have learned that his sister had a fish dinner all prepared for my epicurean tastes. (In talking to him this morning I learned that she is a Baroness, very obviously having married a Baron. See all the aristocratic life I slipped up on.)

I just realized that it is another sister and not Lucien who is the Baroness. Tsk! Tsk!

Monday morning, because the throngs prevented me from doing any other sightseeing, I watched the miles of French troops walk and ride past the reviewing stand. De Gaulle was there—I verified that by aid of binoculars—with the Sultan of Morocco. We could scarcely have had a better spot for observation, for the balconies of the hotel look directly over the square. On the roof of the American Embassy next door a small crowd gathered also, but the numbers there were limited. For exhausting hours the troops passed by, many, many in American clothes, all in American vehicles, or rather, I should say, produced in America. I presume they are being paid for and thus can be called French.

Monday afternoon—a Red Cross sightseeing tour about the city, offering a quick glance at the most noted spots—Arc de Triumph, Eiffel Tower, Invalides & Napoleon’s Tomb, Notre Dame, Louvre. Very good but very sketchy. I never did like guided tours of that sort very well.

Tuesday morning—trip to Versailles. The Chateau truly is magnificent even though most of the furnishings are only now being replaced. The immensity of the buildings and the grounds is almost overwhelming. It takes but little understanding to see why such constructions by the French kings led to the Revolution. The cost in money and man power must have been terrific drain on the country’s economy. Now the gardens are once again being put into shape, & the furnishings brought from hiding. I hope to see it again at a later date when normalcy has been restored.

Tuesday afternoon—walking by myself along the Seine, poking in the book stalls, strolling through the gardens and about the Louvre, a more leisurely contemplation of Notre Dame, through the Latin Quarter and the University section, the Pantheon (where I followed a guide and discovered he was taking us through the tombs of the great buried beneath the edifice),
the Luxembourg Gardens.

Wednesday morning—Lq Madaleine, Les Invalides, shopping—I only asked prices, bought nothing. One can’t begin to buy souvenirs at the prices charged. Afternoon—Sacre Coeur, a large church overlooking the city, very showy but not particularly attractive. Later—the train for the return trip home.

Two evenings we attended the famous shows of Paris which have world wide notoriety—Folies Bergeres & the Casino de Paris. They truly are daring according to American standards, but to the French it seems to be the accepted thing.

I found Paris to be probably the most beautiful city I have seen in Europe but not the most interesting, for my taste. (Rome would be my choice in that matter.) The main thoroughfares are enormously wide, bordered by trees and wide sidewalks. Parks, both small and large are conveniently scattered throughout the city. The buildings are massive and space in the town is most deceiving. On a map the distances appear small, but to weary arches they are terrifically long. The city, too, is clean, which is more than can be said for many localities here. As everywhere else in France, vehicles travel excessively fast. At night many of the buildings are illuminated by search lights, though not as extensively as before the war I understand. Everyone here loves to stroll or sit at sidewalk cafes watching the world pass by.

One would be almost tempted to say, after a superficial survey, that a majority of Parisian women are prostitutes. Naturally that is not true, but the numbers thronging the city give you that impression. As one person said, at the present time no working girl in Paris can afford to dress well. Anyone you see walking along the streets well dressed is either wealthy or a prostitute. There are thousands of them here, many of them openly soliciting business on the streets, even grabbing passersby by the arm in expectation of making an agreement. Perhaps that does not sound credible to you, but it is the truth. I have seen it myself.

With that sobering thought concerning French culture I’ll close tonight. I must make up for the sleep lost last evening during the trip down.

Oh yes. I’m not staying in Lyon as I previously thought. I, too, am returning to Marseille in a very few days.

Love,
Son

Letter 373, 1945-06-24 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 35

Dear Mother and Dad,

The weather here is sweltering. Now it is about eleven at night and almost as hot as if it were noon. I’m sitting on my bed wearing only my undershorts and still the perspiration is rolling off. We hoped to cool off a bit today by driving out into the countryside, but the air movements the weapons carrier stirred up just helped to roll more heat over us. It is really bad.

I’m still in Lyon, for my previous plans for returning to Marseille were disrupted. Only my
self and Sergeants Coy, Schrodermeir and Cohen left to watch dust collect on the boxes. Too, I have been raised a step in the army world—I’m a depot commander (which sounds good even if it doesn’t mean much.)

Mail is very poor. Perhaps it is being delayed in Marseille.

During this afternoon’s trip we visited some caverns in the nearby hills—Grottes de la Balme. Of course they cannot compare with our famous ones at home, and I doubt if these are famous in Europe. However, the visit proved to be interesting. We located the town easily enough but, since the grotto was not well marked, nearly missed the entrance to the caverns. On a side road I spotted a gaping hole in the hillside that proved to be the caves. No ticket sellers or even guides were about when we first arrived and we thought we were out of luck. The usual children appeared from nowhere, however, asking if we wanted a guide. Then a sightseeing French couple appeared, followed by a fat, red faced, middle aged Frenchman, well stuck with wine (in his stomach) who proved to be a guide. Three middle aged woman, plus the children, completed the party. The price of admission—15 francs. The coolness was worth more than that. The tour was most enjoyable because of the simplicity involved and because it was rural France and not a U.S. inspired trip. The children raced about, jabbered to us, were scolded by their mothers when they clambered on the wrong side of the railings. The guide rambled on in French, with us occasionally catching a word but not the meaning. The lighting was scarcely adequate in sections, but we stumbled noisily along, all laughing, shouting when the way became narrow. The women marveled at the right spots at the right times, and asked innumerable questions. Many of the galleries were difficult to traverse because of the very small space between the walls, but all squeezed and squirmed through in single file. Several times it was necessary to back track, especially when we visited the various galleries that led to balconies overlooking the main hall. The stalactites & stalagmites were almost inconsequential, though a few of the formations proved to be unusual. I believed I enjoyed it most for the reason that it was not too over commercialized, not too surveyed with a paved route. Some of the steps were merely chipped out areas on an inclined slope. Some of the paths were slippery with mud, some so narrow that only one foot could be placed at a time. Some parts of the route were even exciting, particularly the section that involved feeling your way up and down almost perpendicularly from one level to another a good many feet above. The trip lasted about two hours, and by the end we were perspiring despite the comparative coolness—though it lacked the damp, cool temperature of real large underground wonderlands. It took real effort to climb and squeeze and twist but I enjoyed it, very minute from the first view of the gaping entrance to the moment we returned to the old shrine that has been built at the side of the opening. A real rural outing.

Lightning is flashing and I hear occasional rolls of thunder. A good rain would help.

We saw some beautiful farmlands today wonderful valley lands thick with wheat and hay. France’s food situation should be improved by next year.

Love,
Son
27 June 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

I'm starting a letter early in the morning for a change. I had planned to write last evening, but instead went to see the “Dictator” with Charlie Chaplin. Unfortunately it was in French so I did not follow it particularly well. The pantomime was good but otherwise I missed much of it. It is very popular here for the people heard about it during the occupation and looked forward expectantly to see it. Pourchet and the French Warrant Officer Pornan (who just returned after a month's recuperative leave following an attack of Jaundice) went together and afterward we sat for about an hour at a sidewalk café.

I might just as well tell you the bad news right away. We are slated for a trip to the Pacific, but how soon no one knows. It might even be possible that we will travel by way of the states, but once again no one knows. I know that with the few points that I have that I am certain to go and I much prefer to go with the company than be transferred to another unit (perhaps even the infantry) and go with it. Life in a depot really should not prove to be too tough, even in the Pacific. I'm hoping that we will go to the mainland and not be cooped up on one of the tiny islands.

Still collecting stamps? Here are a few you may like.

Since I last wrote we have had sufficient rain to make the weather slightly more tolerable. The sun is finally easing through now, and the sky is light only in spots. Cool climate – but not in the Pacific.

I played tennis yesterday with Sergeant Coy and nearly wore myself down to a frazzle. The sun was terrifically hot, and we nevertheless played for two hours. If only I could practice regularly I might show some improvement, but as it is now, I get on the courts so seldom and irregularly that I get my exercise but no improvement. A Frenchman at the hotel has asked me to play with him tomorrow evening and despite my protestations of inability he said that he was still willing, so I try it once.

Albert Evitts sent me a letter recently and I'm enclosing it for you to see.

Off for another game of tennis this afternoon if the courts dry off enough after last night's downpour. Perhaps I'll be another Donald Budge yet (I don't call him Don anymore. It sounds too personal)

Love,
Son

July, 1945

2 July 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,
It seems to be destiny that I do not sleep often in my new hotel room. Yes I have moved again, this time back to the Grand Nouvel from the Hotel Piolat. My new room is most pleasant, for it opens out onto the Rhone River and thus receives any of the cool breezes that may be stirring. But to return to not sleeping often in my new room. I've been sightseeing again, and when I returned this evening I discovered my name on a list as duty officer. Arriving at six and going on duty at six was not convenient, but at least will enable me to type off a few lines if I can keep my eyes open.

Yes, sightseeing again, this time to Chamonix in the Mont Blanc region. Each weekend a small group from the depot goes on a “camping trip” in the real Alpine regions. This time I was the fortunate officer representative. Saturday morning after the men had been paid our little expedition started, the weapon’s carrier jammed to the gills with three days’ rations, extra gasoline, blankets, shelterhalves, cameras, and ten men. We could not have asked for better weather. The sun was wonderful and the sky almost cloudless.

If you have a map of France handy you may be interested in following our travels. Our first general line of direction was for Chambery. We stopped for lunch before reaching there, however, at a small restaurant hidden in the hills. We are not permitted to buy meals from civilian sources here and so we merely had them cook our meal for us from the rations we were carrying. Some of the fellows bought wine with the meal and we left them the crackers and other food we did not eat. They seemed satisfied with that arrangement, so naturally we took advantage of it. Frankly, I think that they did not fare too well, for we were hungry and ate heartily. Very little was left, but apparently enough to satisfy them. Or perhaps they did it out of courtesy or for the price of the wine. While waiting for lunch to be prepared we explored a gorge and the entrance to small caves along the walls of the cleft that were advertised at the restaurant. Into the caves we did not go.

The route continued on to Chambery, then Albertville, Uigne, Megeve, Saint Gervais, and Chamonix. I had seen part of this section previously, but in the rain and much earlier in the year. The difference caused by the improvement in weather and season was amazing. It was great the first time, but now, with the sun shining the snow to a dazzling whiteness and the verdant greens serving as contrast, the scenery was magnificent. The closer we drove toward Chamonix the closer the mountains hemmed us in, until we [were] at last at the foot of the snow covered peaks, passing close to terminal moraines that mark the end of the glaciers that flow so slowly down from the heights above.

Our travel orders allowed us to visit Chamonix, but did not permit us to stay at any of the rest hotels run by the army (mostly air corps, for they rush in and commandeer all the finest places—always) so we were force[d] to find our own accommodations. This was ostensibly a camping trip, but these rear area commandos (most of whom had always been in the rear) always look for comfort before anything else. Naturally they wanted to find a hotel. The weather was cold and so I agreed. I knew it would be difficult to find a suitable place in Chamonix itself, so we drove on to some of the smaller towns further up the valley. Most of the resorts are closed now because the war had negated their former patronage, but at last, after climbing for several miles and crossing the col to the other side of the ridge, we came to the last village before the Swiss Border. There we found a small mountain hotel where the proprietor agreed to let us sleep for thirty-five francs (70¢) a night, and also cook our meals from the rations we were carrying. It was really wonderful. Spotlessly clean rooms, very friendly mountain people, brisk air, stark and rugged scenery in a narrow valley, strewn with
boulders that had rolled down from the peaks. The views from and about this little village of Vallorcine were not gracious or gentle scenery. All was bold, and stern. In the vicinity of the homes there were gardens and tall grass, but further up the valley the terrain was closely cropped grazing land liberally spotted with rocks. At the Col des Moutets a patch of snow still lay unmelted by the roadside. As we waited for supper the men returned to the scattered homes with the cattle which had been grazing on the steep mountainsides during the day, each man with four or five cows slowly plodding before him toward the cow sheds.

Before going to bed that evening we drove the remaining two or three miles to the Swiss-French border, talked to the guards for a few minutes, stepped across into Switzerland, admired the scenery, bought a few postcards and a few of us still had energy enough to walk back up to the col to better enjoy the view of the snow capped masses back down the valley.

I can't remember when I have slept better than I did that night. Scarcely had I touched the pillow when I was knitting up my cares. Nothing more do I remember until the pelting rain woke me about six thirty the next morning. Yes, rain as a most inauspicious beginning for our vacation. The tops of the mountains about us were swirling with clouds and the rain beat down. The view was nil and the temperature low. We had expected to return to Chamonix for the day but for several hours that morning we just waited about for the weather to clear. By ten some of the boys had decided to attend mass at the little village church. Shortly after they left with the vehicle the clouds broke. I could not bear to let a minute of sunshine be wasted so I started out to the cascades that were roaring down the nearby mountain side. It was only a short distance, but only two of the boys went the entire distance with me. The terrific force with which the water raced by indicated that it was coming from a great height and a well defined path running by the edge of the stream whetted my interest. Perhaps I would follow it for a little way. Fortunately the two sergeants with me were as enthusiastic mountaineers as I, for we climbed for two hours steadily. At first I thought we might be able to make the top of one of the mountains, but after walking a while and contemplating it more closely, I realized that would be impossible with the little time we had available. So we just followed the path. Eventually we reached great patches of snow that were contributory sources to the stream. When the scenery was most interesting and I was prepared to do some real shooting with my camera, the roll in the camera finished and the spare in my pocket had been accidentally exposed when the end of the roll came off. All I will be able to send you of that will be postcards of similar views. I was alternately hot and cold during the climb. The exertion would leave me hot and perspiring until a frigid wind blew down from the glaciers suddenly chilling me through. I through [threw] my jacket over my shoulders and then would take it off. My cap was too hot and a moment later it was cold without it. Still we went up, our destination being a house we had glimpsed high on one of the lower peaks. About noon we reached it, found it uninhabited (I had guessed on the approach that it was the location of a French-Swiss border outpost), enjoyed the view, especially the great snow fields on the peaks nearby, and then made a hurried descent to arrive in time for lunch. Later we learned that before the war that particular building was inhabited and served as a stopover point for those climbing Mont Buet. We perhaps were about half way to the top, with the most difficult climbing still above.

During the afternoon we returned to Chamonix, rode the teleferique (a sort of swinging cable car) to a mountain across the valley from Mont Blanc. By becoming absorbed in taking pictures I missed the second stage of the ride, and after I saw where it went I am rather glad
that I did not take the entire trip. Really thrilling, though I presume it must be safe enough. We missed the train ride to the Mer de Glace (Sea of Ice), but I climbed high enough to get a fairly good view of the lower end of it. We simply did not have the time to do and see all that I had planned. I must go again if I possibly can. I would love to climb Mont Blanc itself, but I fear that is out of the question. I would do it though if I could so manage.

Each morning, in addition to the rain that greeted our ears, cow bells, giant bells hung about the neck of each animal, gently roused us from our slumbers. The music of those bells will always remind me of that Alpine country and so I bought a medium sized one in a souvenir shop in town. What I will ever use it for I do not know, but it is exactly that those that the farmers have about their animals necks and I wanted one. So, one of these days you will be receiving a cowbell in the mails. I bought it for the simple reason that I wanted it. For no practical reason whatsoever.

Last night snow rather than rain fell on the mountains above us. This morning, rather than the bare rocks that only dully reflect the daylight, a slight coating of snow had collected in the crevices and on the ledges, presenting a different aspect of the mountains than we had seen before. However, by the time the snow fell in the valley it had turned to rain, though the wind was biting cold. We ate early, left for Chamonix for some souvenir shopping and by nine thirty were headed back toward Lyon – in the pouring rain and with no top on our vehicle. Off and on all morning the rain broke through until at noon we were caught in a real downpour of rain and hail, so hard that we were forced to stop just outside Annecy. Enough hail collected along the edges of my seat so that I could form a fair sized snowball. No unusual occurrences thereafter except that about twenty miles out of Lyon “something” happened to the engine and we were forced to drive the rest of the distance at about twenty miles an hour. Thus my six o’clock arrival.

Love,
Son

Dear Mother & Dad,

The 4th of July in France. A holiday for us here, too, but not much like the old ones at home. The French city officials arranged a brief ceremony for all the officers in Lyon, inviting us to the prefecture. So, dressed in our best we assembled in the center of town, climbed into the collected automobiles and with a military escort drove in solemn defile through the city. No one knew exactly where we were going, someone even remarking that the slow pace and the crowded cars reminded him of a funeral procession. In a few, brief minutes we arrived and climbed the long marble staircase to the reception room, gilded, frescoed, and lighted by glittering chandeliers. A long table, decorated with flowers (red, white & blue) and a double row of goblets along the edge was set along one edge of the hall. We shuffled in, still not knowing what to expect. A few French civilians gradually eased into the room and one, a stout, elderly man began circulating about the group, greeting each officer personally. I was
one of the few who recognized him—Eduard Herriot, perennial mayor of Lyon and President of France. (Even after we had left a few had not yet recognized him). Mr. Brooks, the American consul, was also present. The ceremony was brief. A Frenchman, then Mr. Brooks, and finally Herriot addressed us—each in French. I followed sketchily but clearly enough to get the meaning. By far the best speaker was the former president, an orator, but very sincere. M. Herriot had been in the hands of the Germans until the very end of the war, but still appeared in good health but very tired. (How should I know? Perhaps that is how he normally looks.) During the speeches, white gloved waiters poured champagne into the glasses so that they were filled at the end of the ceremony. Minor distractions during the program were the popping of corks in the background and a French photographer occasionally taking flash pictures of Herriot. The champagne, with tiny sandwiches, completed a very pleasant interlude. We shook hands with Herriot again and drove away, back to the depot. A very nice gesture on the part of the French.

Two packages came yesterday, one containing the shirts and the other the usual excellent selection of foods. Certainly no one is better looked after and cared for from home than I.

So, the teeth have arrived! Good. I thought that dentist would never get them done. I suppose that by now you have begun to get the hang of managing them so you don't chew your teeth with potato rather than vice versa. Don't give up. Now, when is dad to begin getting his?

I received the pictures of the children at Brookfield. Thank Kenneth's wife for me, won't you?

A good number of letters have come during the last few days, scattered from the first part of June to the last week. As yet have you received any of the packages I sent during the past months—one with the perfumes, one with wooden shoes, another with my watches & the last small one with photographs? They seem to be unusually long in reaching you.

Be sure to send me my watches as soon as they are repaired. I'm lost without them, for I have no clock or watch in my room and so am never even sure what time it is in the morning when I wake up.

Regarding your questions about the franc—we, of course, receive the amount we are supposed to receive. That is, if our pay is $100, we receive the equivalent of $100 in francs or 5000 francs, (the franc is being valued at 50 to $1.00 or approximately 2¢). If I wish to send that money home, I can convert it back to its equivalent $100 and not lose a penny. However, it is when I begin to buy articles in civilian shops that I am effected. To the civilian, the franc is worth much less than 2¢. That is, all over France, something for which we would ordinarily pay 2¢ at the wages we are receiving costs many more than 1 franc, for wages of the civilians are supposedly correspondingly inflated. The French, therefore, keep even. However, our wages are stationery and we receive the same number of francs no matter what the increase may be in the cost of items on the market. Naturally it is not as simple as this, for many, many people wages do not rise as correspondingly fast as do prices. Many are as bad or worse off than we—really worse, for they have to spend their money to live and to us our outside expenditures are only “extras.” Obviously, it is true that the buying power of the money we receive here is not worth what it is supposed to be.

I received my driver's license. Thank you, but I fear I will not be using this one either. I'll keep it, just in case, however.

You might occasionally send a can of Nestles cocoa also, especially when you send the
powdered milk.

Your garden sounds wonderful. If only you could send me some of those fresh vegetables! Well, next year maybe.

Will you tell Nora Mae (Bain) Godfrey that I received her note & was pleased to hear from her. I'll try to write but I'm not sure I'll make the grade.

The shirts which you sent are fine, just the type I want. I have not put them on for size yet, but I'm sure they are OK.

I got Phebe all excited in a recent letter by enclosing a clipping from “Time” about some prohibition leader (Ella Boole, I believe) complaining because the French gave our soldiers wine instead of fruit juice when they landed. That is a wonderful example of logical thinking. Where were they going to get the fruit juice in the first place; and secondly, the French drink wine as we do water or coffee. Is she going to try to change their habits, too?

I have a beautiful view of the river from my window, and I am high enough above the street so the usual street noises do not readily reach me. Really a beautiful spot. Lyon certainly is one of the nicest cities in Europe.

Love,
Son

Letter 377, 1945-07-15 (back to Table of Contents)

MS026, box: 35 folder: 36

15 July 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

Don't be worried if you have not been receiving letters for a week or so, for I simply have not been writing. For one reason I have been terrifically busy, and another the weather has not been very conducive to correspondence.

Your letters have been coming in very irregularly but more plentifully than heretofore. Today I received three letters, two dated the eighth of July.

I was worried about the watches but am relieved to learn that they have reached you safely. I hope Harold will be able to repair at least one of them very quickly, for I am just lost without one. There is no clock in my room and since I have moved, no public clock outside the window to refer my time troubles to.

The package with the ice cream mix and the fruit flavorings came several days ago. Yesterday we made one dish of cream and the result was most satisfactory even though we did let it freeze too quickly and thus failed to whip it as the directions said. Next I am planning to add a few spoonsful of Nestles cocoa to the mix and test the outcome. It should be good.

Last Sunday the French officers at the depot took me out to dinner and at little restaurant in a small town in the country about forty miles from Lyon. The French really love to eat and make a real ceremony of their meals. A meal is not served as we would do it, but is stretched out over many courses, usually only one or two items being served at one time. We put our meat and various vegetables on one plate at the same time. In France each is served separately, one after the other. The officers complained that even this meal did not meet the
standards set in pre-war France, but I certainly found it very satisfactory. The restaurant had no bread, so before the meal we went to the bakery and bought what bread we could, of course having to use the precious ration stamps for this splurge. The staff of life here is sold by weight. One loaf was shaped like a crueler, hole in the middle and all. You merely insert your arm through the opening and thus transport it home. The other was only part of one long loaf, but together they proved to be more than sufficient for the dinner. Without bread and wine the Frenchman does not consider he is eating a meal and during the repast each had a piece of bread in his left hand at practically all times. The meal began with small bologna like slices of meat and of course the bread. Next came the specialty known as “swallow’s nest”, so called because the boiled egg, sliced through the center and wrapped with meat resembles a nest in appearance. Each person had an egg thus prepared along with a white flour sauce and gravy with which it is served. Really wonderful. Next, buttered string beans—just string beans and nothing else for that course. The vegetables were followed by veal. Next, a tiny patty of cheese. Then, sherries and cake, neither particularly good because the necessary sugar was missing. Coffee completed the meal. The French cooks truly can do wonderful things with food. After dinner we continued a little further out into the country, lay in the grass for a brief siesta and then returned to Lyon. I ate with the officers that evening also, at their regular mess and enjoyed another fine meal, though they asserted that such a good supper was unusual in the army, I had just hit it at a lucky time.

This past week I have been busy getting fibre (which I misinterpreted to be saw dust) for repacking medical items to be shipped to the Pacific.

The surgeon’s office assigned me the job of getting the stuff from a French factory that produces the stuff. With the aid of a large scale map in the office of the Rhone Touring Club, the Base Purchasing Office, our French interpreter and sundry other assistants I finally managed to discover where I would pick it up. Originally I expected to get thirty tons but one concern had released its quota so I then made plans for getting only twenty. I thought that surely four two and a half ton trucks would be sufficient for hauling ten ton, but when I arrived at the first factory and realized that it was excelsior and not saw dust that I was after my four trucks looked mighty meagre. As it turned out, all eight trucks were needed. We finally returned to Lyon that night, suffering only one smashed radiator, one engine that refused to purr, and a flat tire. (French drivers, naturally) After transferring two of the loads to different trucks and trying to secure the bales of “hay” so they would not topple off their triple and quadruple banked perches, we started for Marseille. The details of the Marseille without losing a bale. Somehow or other the return trip involved carrying diesel oil and cleaning fluid. After a start late the next afternoon, most of us reached Lyon about midnight of the thirteenth. The remaining few trucks which had broken down during the trip, straggled in until the last arrived about five in the morning.

Lt. Rose is in the hospital with the mumps. I did not get to see him when I was down there for all my time was used on business. I hope it does not develop into anything serious.

Just a few minutes ago we mixed some more ice cream, so you can judge for yourself how quickly the mix is going. I would appreciate it if you could send me some more, as well as another box or so of Nestles cocoa. Though I have no idea of how long we will remain here, I still will take a chance and ask you to keep sending those packages. Also you might send me some more developer when you can. The other is all gone. My film is going quite rapidly so if you get more, send it along. I could even use some bulk and roll my own if you wish to send it
that way. The sandwich spread which came recently was just the thing. Really good. The day we went for the saw dust Coy and I missed our supper so we feasted on the frankfurters that were in the package that came that day. I could go for some right now, especially with slices of pickle inside and wrapped in bacon and served in toasted rolls.

Today’s typing is worse than usual. I'm thinking so fast ahead of what my fingers respond to that almost always I leave out the punctuation and seldom finish a sentence without misspelling several words. Well, such is the life of a moron.

No, Kenny has not written that he has received the pictures.

Do you like the perfume or not? You never have said. I gave you a list one time of whom to distribute the little containers of solid perfume. Do you still have the names. If not I shall try to make over again. You, of course, Barbara, Mildred, MaryAnita, Grandma, Martha, etc. I can’t remember now even how many I sent.

Thank you, yes, the pad lock has reached me and I have already put it to use. Thanks, again.

Yesterday was Bastille Day here in France, a national holiday that corresponds somewhat to our Independence Day. I was too weary after my hectic trip to Marseille to see much of the festivities, but last evening I stood on one of the bridges that span the Rhone and watched the display of fireworks set off from the hill on which the cathedral stands. They were very nice, mostly rockets and star flares, but not spectacular.

I do not clearly follow that mess about Elliott Roosevelt and his loans, but neither do I trust Westbrook Radler and all his assertions. Pegler goes out of his way to cause trouble, often emphasizing little details that would mean nothing except for a perverted mind that twist every fact to his own use. He may be correct in this particular case, but, I just don’t like Pegler.

The French Major, Major Botherol, and then interpreter have asked me to go with them to a bull fight this afternoon. Exactly what it will be like I can only guess, but I will try it once. It is to be in the nearby park that adjoins the depot area.

I received a letter from Jim, telling me briefly about his trip home, how much he enjoyed seeing you, and that he expects to be send to the Pacific before too long after his training has been completed. Concerning Mort’s voice, he says it shows big improvement but still has a long way to go.

The book of “Currier and Ives” is very interesting and I think that you probably would enjoy it. I don’t want you to feel that all those books should just be ones to please me. You might care to choose some of them yourself you know.

You often ask about the shoulder insignia that I am wearing now. It is none at present, but I understand that there is one that that we are entitled to wear. I bought one just for your collection. I never wear it myself but I thought that you might like it.

I hope that this will make up a little for the scarcity of letters from me during the last week. I’ll try to do better from now on.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother & Dad,

As usual, these last few weeks, I have nothing to say, so this note should prove most interesting.

I had planned to read and write last evening, but just as I had settled down in an easy chair overlooking the river, the phone rang, announcing that so-and-so was in the lobby. And up they came – Pourchet, Didelot and Pornin. They wanted me to go out with them and celebrate. We celebrated very mildly, walked the street dancing, drank a mixture of very weak beer and lemonade and watched a brief parade by some of the Indo-Chinese troops stationed here. The parade was the highlight of the evening, for it had a true oriental touch that I had never before encountered. You have seen photographs of phatastic dragons, lighted lanterns, brilliant tissue paper decorations etc. that the oriental people are so capable of designing. These were all represented last evening.

The bull fight yesterday afternoon was a complete flop as far as I am concerned. The participants, togged up like traditional Spanish toreadors, etc., pranced about waving red capes for fifteen minutes or so and then the toreador, using poles with sharp points on the end would sneak up and plunge them into the bull’s back and then dash for cover. They do not kill the animal here, but still it seemed most stupid to me. I left before it was half over. I didn’t feel that staying for the complete performance was worth missing my supper.

Tomorrow I start for another load of “hay”, but this time I’m bringing it to Lyon in trucks and then shipping it from here by rail car. I don’t want another of those Marseille convoys if I can help it. The trip is bad enough. Marseille itself if worse.

Love,
Son

Dear Mother & Dad,

Did you ever thank Nora Mae for the letter she sent? Please tell her that I enjoyed hearing from her very much.

Mom, I’ve heard some excellent comments concerning your new teeth. Everyone says they look very nice, even making you look ten years younger. If that rejuvenation continues at that pace, you will be romping the sidewalks in shorts before I get back home.

A June 2 V-Mail came today, apparently having been lost for a couple of months. A package also containing crackers, sardines, raisins, etc. Nice, as usual. Will you try to buy me three or four undershirts, called T-Shirts? They clearly resemble those sport shirts I used to wear. I would like them for use while playing tennis as well as for their primary purpose.
I'll enclose a negative or two that you may want enlarged. Some should print up very well. Yes, I like those Easter eggs very much. If you have not already eaten it, send it along. Barbara wrote about a book on teaching which she had been reading and I asked her to give you the name. She recommended it highly, so I think I would like it also. If you can easily locate it, send it along, please.

I had planned to go swimming last evening, the first time this year, but unfortunately the rains descended, so I went to the movies instead. Perhaps this afternoon I'll make another stab at it.

I bought a pair of $6.00 sun glasses at the P.X. recently, as well as a very light alligator rain coat. I should be getting rid of much of my impedimenta, but instead I continue accumulating more & more. I'll be sorry one of these days when I have to pack for another ocean voyage.

Love,
Son

P.S. When you have these pictures printed but [sic] sure it is done on good paper. The quality of the paper makes all the difference in the world in the result.
was not until late this spring that we began to have anything of the sort. Up to then all had been dehydrated, and no matter how hard you try those dehydrated foods never get back certain qualities lost while being robbed of their water content. We need cooks like you who can make anything in the food line taste good.

I simply can't write letters any more for I have absolutely nothing to say. I do the same things day in and day out and have told you about all my activities. I'll just stop until another inspiration comes.

Love,
Son

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25 July 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

I'm enclosing a money order for one hundred dollars. I did not send a PTA this last month and am now carrying too much money on my person.

Still no mail. It has been several days now since the last letters from you arrived. What can be holding the mail up I have no idea, but everyone's mail is the same way. I presume that my watches, or watch at least, are on the way and also are being held up.

Swimming again yesterday afternoon at the Lyon Plage. I'm acquiring quite a fair tan now, but it does not seem to be settling on me very fast. No more burning, however, and that is a good sign. Some of the Frenchmen who apparently spend all their time in the sun are almost black. Truly.

The French are exhuming the bodies of members of the underground who were killed by the Germans in Lyon. Perhaps my curiosity is morbid, but I decided that I wanted to see exactly how the business was proceeding. German P.W.'s are doing the actual labor and they do not seem to be particularly pleased with the experience. The odor is not particularly bad, for the remains have been buried so long that they are already badly decomposed. Several have already been dug up and indentified by their clothes or jewelry or their dental work. The authorities know who should be intederred there and they are using a particular list of names for identification purposes. The area was once a German training camp and the victims were shot near the rifle range and then buried in unmarked graves. I took a few pictures that you may like to see if they come out well.

All morning I have begun to finish this note, but I have had a constant stream of interruptions, mostly people just talking about anything at all.—food, books, French, etc. No wonder I accomplish so little during the day. I finally have realized that most of my time is taken up with doing nothing because someone else just wants to talk.

Love,
Son

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399
27 July 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

Several letters came yesterday, the latest dated the 15th of the month. Very many are missing, however.

I imagine that the watches are on the way by now. I hope they arrive soon, for it is most inconvenient to be continuously guessing at the time.

Lt. Wurtzel is in Rome on a leave. I just read the orders today saying that he was to go there for a rest. I'm still hoping for another chance to go sightseeing – Switzerland, England or wherever I can escape to.

There might be a possibility of the company going to the Pacific via the states. If I hear anything definite I certainly will let you know. Don't get your hopes up very high, however.

I have acquired a fine tan now, swimming as I do practically every afternoon. I'm even trying to dive but that venture has not developed especially successfully. I had to work a bit this afternoon and so could not get away today. Tomorrow perhaps again.

I had one of my 35mm negatives enlarged to postcard size & will send it with this note if I can make it squeeze into the envelope. It really is not too bad considering the size of the original. The photography shop did not return the negative so if I cannot locate it there this afternoon, these will be the only ones I'll have from it. I realize that I have not sent most of the negatives but am planning to mail them together in a package shortly. It is much too expensive to have prints made here, so I shall send the negatives for you to have copies made.

Love,
Son

28 July 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

For a few minutes last evening I thought the German army was trying to retake the city. A great cloud of gray smoke was rising to the south of us, growing denser as each succeeding roar of an explosion smote our ears. Several times there were air bursts similar to the explosion of anti-aircraft shells, but such a possibility seemed impossible now that the war has been so many weeks ended. Still, it reminded me more of a fairly near artillery barrage than anything I had heard since leaving Italy. And surprisingly enough a portion of my surmise was not incorrect. A munition train, just shortly after it left the Perrache Station had collided with a passenger train and caught afire. The inevitable happened. The fire spread to the shells. The resulting mess I have only heard about, but undoubtedly the devastation in the surrounding area was complete. – whole apartment houses blown to nothing, the tracks twisted masses of metal. Schroedermeier and Cohen are out there this afternoon helping clear away the
wreckage, leaving only Coy and myself at the depot.

It rained this morning but unfortunately it has again cleared this afternoon. We have not had a decent rainfall in weeks and the farms certainly are in crying need of water by now. The French were very optimistic about a successful wheat harvest this season; I'm hoping that this does not mean that they will be disappointed. Though they try not to show it on the surface, the majority of the French are a very discouraged people. They need a good farm season and many other boosts to their morale before they can again face the world with confidence.

I recovered the lost negative. The proprietor of the shop had discovered the omission and had already put it aside in expectation of my calling for it. You might like to have some of the other shots enlarged also.

I rather like a rainy day myself and am somewhat disappointed that it stopped so early in the day. The coolness and dampness of a wet day are fine stimulants to my energy sources. I set out with gusto this morning but have begun to run down again since the heat has returned. I have not done one bit of work on my history since the hot weather began. At night I go to the movies, walk about the town a bit and then go to bed. Scarcely any reading even.

No mail again today. Something is rotten somewhere. Probably all the shipping is being diverted elsewhere. Even plane space must have a priority for the Pacific now.

I believe that I shall send some of my excess winter clothing home, for I certainly cannot carry all I have when we again board the ship for our next ocean voyage. Just how I shall get it back when I want it I do not know, but I'll worry about that at another time.

Several days ago my excellent pair of sun glasses were stolen while I was swimming at the pool. I am quite sure of that. I know the particular Frenchman who took them, but I can prove nothing. I can only wait and hope to catch him wearing them. The P.X. had another less expensive pair that I bought as a substitute.

I am planning to attend some sort of French entertainment this evening sponsored by the French section of the depot. I fear it will not be particularly interesting but I will try it anyway. I can always find some excuse to leave if it gets too bad.

I'm running out of words again, so rather than just ramble on I'll close this collection of words.

Love,
Son

Letter 384, 1945-07-31 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 36

Dear Mother & Dad,

Still in Lyon doing as little as usual. My swim late yesterday afternoon has left my head plugged, but the sun today should clear it. My wonderful tan has disappeared. After all this time I have begun to peel, and at present my back is molted tan, white and brown. It should come back without burning this time.

I had begun to worry about my watches but now I realize that they are not even on the
way. They should be ready soon, should they not?
Don't let the condition of your package to Jim worry you. Remember that crossed the
Atlantic twice and was still recognizable. Mine arrive in fine condition. Those bread sticks
were very fine, especially for eating with sandwich spread, sardines, etc. Lt. Mooney and I
expect to go to the Alps over the next weekend and I'll carry some of the canned goods from
home to augment the menu.

Today was pay day, so I'll be sending another money order shortly. As I have said before,
don't be afraid to use whatever I send whenever it is necessary.

So many of the French are being de-mobilized that I'm wondering if they will have any
army left. Perhaps it is because I am with a good many who are being discharged and my
opinion is therefore unbalanced, but I feel there is little expectation of the French doing much
in the Pacific war. Several officers at the medical depot have already left or are leaving soon –
because they are teachers, because they have three children, because they are students,
because they have been mobilized for so many years. Undoubtedly many of these men are
necessary for the rebirth of civilian France, but somehow it seems out of proportion. Remem-
ber, please, that I have no official statement concerning the number leaving the service. If I
did, probably my statements here would stand in need of immediate correction.

I am very tired today for some reason. It certainly can't be from overwork. I lay down on
a cot in the supply room after lunch and nearly fell asleep. I'll be dozing off again any minute
now.

Yes, Lt. Rose, Wurtzel etc. are still in Marseille. Only the four of us in Lyon. Herb has gone
to Rome for ten days. Perhaps I'll be able to get another leave yet – Switzerland, England, or
somewhere.

Love,
Son

August, 1945
Letter 385, 1945-08-01 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 37

1 August 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm planning to enclose another money order in this note. I was paid yesterday & naturally
don't want to carry so much on my person.

The Mauldin cartoon is a good one for you to ponder on when you think I'm not getting
home soon enough. You see, you're not the only ones.

No mail again today. More senators on the way to investigate perhaps, and they needed
the space.

There is a rumor floating about that the 81st may go to the Pacific via the states, but
because of unexpected changes that always occur in the army, I'm not counting on it. If it
comes true – wonderful! If not, - c'est la guerre. I could do well with a month or so at home,
however, even though I would hate to leave again.

No swimming again this afternoon. The weather has unexpectedly grown cool during the
Last two days and so the pool is not particularly appealing. Consequently my molten tan is still as ugly as when it finished peeling. Tomorrow perhaps.

Lt. Rose is now in charge of the company since Lt. Wurtzel has been transferred to the 231st. I was talking to Rose today by phone and he said that we have received a warrant officer to replace Mr. O’Neal – The new W.O.’s name is Miller, I believe. No one for Wurtzel yet. Many of the men are also new, the others having left because they had more than the 75 points. I’ll be almost a stranger when I return to the fold at Marseille.

Love,
Son

Letter 386, 1945-08-03 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 37

3 August 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

Forget about sending me any books or anything of that sort that I may have asked for. Now don’t get the wrong impression. I’m neither on my way home nor headed for the Pacific, but looking at the present unstable conditions, I think it unwise to load up on such items. If you have bought them for me already, hang on to them. I’ll be using them later. Right now, let things stay as they are.

The weather is wonderfully cool here now, in fact, so cool that I have not been swimming for several days. I’m actually using covers at night to keep me warm. Very unusual for August in Lyon, I’ve been told. I enjoy though.

Love,
Son

Letter 387, 1945-08-03 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 37

3 August 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I just wrote a V-Mail, asking you not to send me any of the books, or other permanent possessions that I had requested previously. I’m repeating it here, for I do not know which will prove to be the fastest vehicle for reaching you. No, I’m not on my way home. Neither am I on my way to the Pacific. I simply do not know what to expect and therefore do not want to get loaded down with any more extras than I already have.

Recently I have sent two money orders, each for one hundred dollars. I trust you have received them.

Tomorrow after lunch Lt. Mooney & I are to leave for Chamonix for the weekend. I had hoped to take one of the boys from the depot with me, but that is impossible. Schroedermeier

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has gone to Paris for three days and that leaves only two men at the depot for duty. To leave only one man would create a too difficult situation.

I will send the rest of my negatives to you shortly, first class in a firm wooden box. I have an unbelievable number, most of them never enlarged. It would be almost as cheap to buy an enlarger myself as to have them done by a professional.

Accidentally I forgot to stamp one of my recent letters. I believe it contained another copy of the enlargement, plus the negatives. Have you received it?

How many 88th division patches have I sent to you? I may ask you to return a couple to me if I cannot get any from the fellows in the 350th. We are now allowed to wear our old organization’s insignia on our right shoulder as well as the present one on our left. So far I wear none, but some time I may want to dress up a bit. If you have several, let me know, please.

Has the fox baby come yet? Barbara’s last letter, dated about the middle of the last month, still had no news. He or she certainly should be here by now.

I’m still being haunted by that excelsior deal. Ten more tons to get to Paris and I shall be finished. Practically none of my time here at the depot involves the depot itself. Almost all my few working hours are spent telephoning, riding, seeing people about excelsior. I never knew that such a small, insignificant item as a wood shaving could involve so much red tape & trouble. Actually I don’t mind, for it keeps me busy and thus prevents boredom from attacking, but it is interesting how complicated such situations can become.

Love,
Son

Letter 388, 1945-08-10 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 37

10 August 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

I have not written in approximately a week so I presume that explanations are in order. Truthfully I have been busy most of the time. Last evening I was duty officer and went to the adjutant’s office fully prepared to rectify the error of my ways. However, the usual interruptions that always beset one in the army occurred, and when I finally crawled into the cot at one this morning I had not even taken the top off my pen. Lt. Douglas, a British officer for whose men I had to locate billets last night, spent several hours in the office with me just talking. It really was most enjoyable for the topics ranged from the conduct of the French to principles of education and how they are misapplied in the school systems the entire world round. One of the most stimulating few hours I have expended in many a day. Lt. Douglas is a popular song writer, a composer of dance band music, or something along that line. A very well educated person and charming conversationalist.

Saturday afternoon Lt. Mooney and I left for Chamonix as planned, arriving there early in the evening. We stayed at the same hotel in Vallorcine at which I had rooms before. It was much more crowded now that at the previous visit, August apparently being the vacation sea-
son of the French. The guests were very friendly. Several spoke English well, particularly one very elderly gentleman, a Lutheran minister from Paris, who, with his white haired wife, was waiting his passport to Switzerland where he also has a chalet. Unfortunately our sightseeing schedule prevented us from becoming very well acquainted. I hoping [sic] to make another return trip, so you can imagine how much I enjoy that particular section of France. Sunday morning I made another attempt to ride the teleferique, but again I failed after the first leg of the journey. I just don't like heights, especially when only a little cable is all that is suspending you hundreds of feet above the ground below. The others rode the tiny car to the second peak, but I renigged [sic] and climbed there on foot. It was an hour and a half of stiff climbing but I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it. A young Frenchman was on his way up so I tagged along with him, even sharing one of his dehydrated prunes as an aid to my fast disappearing energy. I found that my rubber soled shoes were much better than his hob nailed ones, except when crossing the patches of snow that in sections covered the trail. Rubber offers fine footing for rock. One particularly steep section that involved using toe holds nicked out of the face of the rock and iron bars fastened to the stone for hand grips was the cause of my losing my hat. I had been sweating so freely that I could not bear even a cap on my head and had been carrying it in my hand. With both hands involved I evidently forgot about it and lost it in the rock (if I had not already mislaid it when we had stopped earlier for a breather). I returned by the same route, but could not locate it. The afternoon was spent on a trip to the Mer de Glace (Sea of Ice), that famous glacier that for thousands of years has been flowing down from the snow fields high in the mountains. It is a most unusual experience, walking on a field of ice during the heat of day in the middle of the summer. The giant cracks and crevaces appear very spectacular from the distance, but a close up view reveals it to be just what any student of geology would expect – hard packed snow and ice, grimy with gravel that has been ground into the mixture during its formation and strewn with boulders that have rolled down on to its surface from the towering mountainsides. Fascinating, nevertheless. The ride up and down on the tiny, jerking cars, too, is an experience not soon forgotten. Early Monday morning we left for Lyon, arriving here about noon.

Monday afternoon I left immediately for Saint Etienne, a town about forty miles from here to complete arrangements for the shipments of the final ten tons of excelsior that have been plagued my existence for several weeks.

Tuesday morning I went to Marseille by jeep to visit the surgeons office and returned Wednesday afternoon. Thursday was involved in catching up with all that had accumulated during my absence. Last night you already know about. Now, am I absolved?

The first watch has arrived, that you, and once again I am free to associate with human beings without making myself too obnoxious. Some letters have come also, including the announcement of the birth of Barbara's son.

The war in the Pacific certainly has taken some spectacular twists during the past week, first the atomic bomb and then Russia's declaration of war. I'm more optimistic than I have been in months about a much more speedy conclusion to the fighting in that theater. Only hope that it comes soon. I have no desire to visit in that part of the world right now.

Probably we will be moving to Marseille within two or three more weeks and then our vacation in Lyon will come to its tragic but long expected finale. Naturally I would like to stay
here, but wishing is not the deciding factor in such policies here.

Love,
Son

P.S. Sgt. Cohen, who was wringing his clothes in the next room, after just finishing washing them gave a blood curdling shout for me. I thought perhaps he had spilled boiling water on himself or had fallen into the pail. Nothing so minor however, the radio has just announced that Japan is willing to accept the terms of the Potsdam Conference, if the emperor does not lose his right as sovereign of Japan. Lord, I hope it’s true. Perhaps I’m not Pacific bound after all.

Son

Letter 389, 1945-08-13? (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 37

13 (?) August 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

We are still waiting for confirmation of the news that the war is over. I’m hoping Japan will accept the revised terms concerning the emperor as they have been presented to her and finish this mess as soon as possible. Tomorrow morning should have some news for us—good, I believe.

I have an order from the 88th authorizing me a combat medical badge. Up to now I do not have the badge itself, but one has been ordered.

Two T-shirts have come. In fact, I’m wearing one right now as I sit in my window looking out over the Rhone. By hundreds the French are thronging into town across the temporary wooden structure built months ago to replace the bridge destroyed by the Germans. A few of the bridges across the Rhone & the Saone have been replaced, but most of them are still only temporary spans. Some day perhaps France will return to its pre war normal, but to me the present pace seems discouragingly slow. France is discouraged and dissatisfied, and angry because we are not giving her more. We even hear mutterings of revolution in October if the elections do not prove satisfactory. Can they be serious after all the bloodshed they have already seen. I doubt it. They surely would think more logically than that.

Yes, I know that Herb was supposed to receive his captaincy but the beginning of redeployment changed the situation. He was wise to refuse it if it meant going to the Pacific instead of home.

No more history again but I feel the urge coming on once more. I’ll truly be glad when I can return home where I can concentrate without thousands of interruptions continuously interfering with a trend of thought.

You won’t mind if I break away now and write a few letters to my other correspondents. Will you? As usual, I am way behind.

Love,
Son
Dear Mother and Dad,

This waiting – waiting – waiting is beginning to get on my nerves. Something is certainly strange. Every hour we sit by the radio waiting to hear the official news that the war is ended, but all we get is the same old story that Japanese news agencies have announced that they are accepting the Potsdam ultimatum. The allied governments are still silent. 5 o’clock Washington has received word from Japan. The official announcement will be forthcoming this evening. Does it seem possible? Can we be that near the end of these long years of fighting? Perhaps I will not continue on my scheduled trip to the Pacific after all, but the army is still secretive about its plans in that respect. Undoubtedly I shall be home much sooner than I even hoped to imagine a few weeks ago. Don’t be expecting me next week, however, or next month. It will be much longer than that.

The second watch came today. Thanks again for seeing that it was repaired. The strap is particularly nice. I had never seen one exactly like that before. In the same mail also were the three films, one in a metal container. I was growing very short of film so they are especially appreciated.

15 August 1945 [Same letter: handwritten addendum]

The news we have been waiting for so long finally came this morning. The war is over. It seems hardly credible. My mode of life has not changed a whit, but somehow there is a difference. Now there is a something definite to look forward to instead of the uncertainty that for months has clouded the future. Dust off my tweeds and press those white shirts. I’m almost a civilian again.

I’m enclosing a panoramic view from my hotel room looking out into the Rhone. If these had been enlarged I feel they would have resulted in a quite favorable photo. I’ll send the negatives along shortly and perhaps you would like to have them blown up a bit.

Love,
Son

19 August 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I realize that my letters are becoming fewer and fewer, but that may be explained by various reasons. First, I am busy every day, now that we have begun to ship all our depot stock to other depots scattered about France. Second, nothing of real interest occurs. The same day by day
events with scarcely a change in routine. Not a bit of real news—except that I should be home by June of next year.

I slept until almost noon today. This afternoon I read for several hours, taking notes on “The Mind in the Making” for future reference in my projected plan for the teaching of history. My ideas on the subject gradually are taking shape, but at present are too nebulous and disarranged for a sensible valuation. I’ll explain to you about my “novel” ideas when I return. In the meantime, I’ll still think and read and write in my usual spasmodic fashion. If I can get some definite information about how long I will be in Europe, I may try to attend one of the Army sponsored universities that are taking shape here. They sound good. I’ll look into the situation as soon as I return to Marseilles.

The reaction of American soldiers to the French troops we come in contact with is not very favorable. Most of our boys are from the vicinity of Marseilles, so perhaps that may explain the situation. The French themselves look down their noses at those from that part of the country. One fact that I have noted, however, may eventually prove to be pertinent. Amongst the ordinary soldiers, the privates of the French army, those who are outstanding in my estimation, those who really “put out”, those who really work, almost always prove to have been members of the Maquis. They showed initiative and responsibility when France was occupied and still show it now. Those that I know, however, are still privates. Others have received the non com ratings. Why I can only guess. Unfortunately my acquaintance is limited, so how extensive this phenomenon is I can only guess, also.

The unfavorable impression which the French give is not limited to those in the army. Many of our troops simply do not like the French as a whole. The reasons are varied, many basically having nothing to do with the French at all. The man want to return home and wistfully compare living and working conditions in Europe with those they left behind. Naturally, every thing at home seems better, and in many instances probably their observations are not too inaccurate. Sanitary conditions just simply do not compare. The French seem terribly slow in rebuilding their country (our men forget that only a few months ago France was an occupied nation). They can’t understand shops & factories closing for two or three weeks in August for an annual vacation despite all that must be done for the country before it will be on its feet again. They don’t like the morals of the people, but many who complain the loudest fall into line with the customs that they deprecate—and fall in line quickly. They don’t like the black market—but they fail to consider that the traffic in American army goods could not be so extensive were there not cooperation on the American side also. As a whole, they do not like the French men, perhaps because perhaps because many of them have ways that appear “sissified” to us, perhaps because so many of them are in civilian clothes while they are in uniform. They do not like the attitude of the French, always looking for help from America, complaining because not enough is coming for them. They want to see them standing on their own, not whining for more aid when they seem to be doing little for themselves. They resent the high prices charged for all commodities when related to the exchange value of our dollar. They did not like the French obviously demobilizing after the war with Germany was over instead of making plans to participate in the Orient, especially when their excuse was that U.S. would not furnish them with sufficient supplies. In this instance, I personally feel that the French government is at fault. Considering the weakened condition of the country following the liberation, they should have admitted their weakness and proceeded with plans to build the domestic conditions of the nation. Instead, deGaulle, and the people as a whole, I presume
began to demand a position of world importance, insisting they be included in the discussions by the big three. This assumption of arrogance at a time when such arrogance had no basis except past prestige and power was a mistake. They should have bowed to the situation and begun to build on a firm foundation rather than let false pride try to assume for them such a compromising position. Consciously or unconsciously the troops here realized “bluff” and did not like it. If they had said “We are weak and unstable. We will try to help furnish troops to prosecute the war but our main occupation now is to try to recondition our country. We will cooperate with you, but do not expect too much material aid from us at present. That will come when we grow stronger.” Instead, they took as an objective immediate emergence as a great power with expansive statements of expectations. The boys would have appreciated sincerity. Instead they got double talk. Probably the greatest cause of hard feelings, however, is the language barrier. If we could have talked with the people, intelligently explaining our position and hearing their side of the questions, greater amiability would have prevailed. Instead rumors, propaganda and half truths assaulted both sides until perhaps permanent damage has been done to Franco-American relationships. Affairs need a definite improvement or much that we thought we had won in the fighting will be lost during the few months after the peace.

Love,
Son

Letter 392, 1945-08-24 (back to Table of Contents)

Dear Mother & Dad,

As you may have suspected because of the dearth of letters received, I have been travelling again. The surgeon at D.B.S. called me to Marseille for an interview concerning my promotion. Thus, for the sake of two or three minutes of verbiage, I rode from Lyon to Marseille and back, leaving Tuesday and returning Thursday.

A group of musicians, playing what appears by ear to be xylophone and accordion, are serenading the evening air outside the hotel window. By way of attracting paying customers, they occasionally play an interlude of about four bars of several different tunes—just enough to catch the ear of one who has a favorite tune that is included in their repertoire.

The French government has agreed to give every American soldier $19 per month to somewhat equalize the differences between the French civilian and American exchange values. It looks like a fine gesture but still is a bitter commentary on European life. The French private receives 6 francs a day (12 cents to our way of thinking), about 180 ($3.60) francs per month. Something looks wrong here. All Americans receive as a “bonus” almost 5 times as much money as the privates of their own (French) army receive. Is it any wonder that the French soldiers are weary and discouraged? If I heard such news I’m sure I would be more than discouraged.

We are rapidly shipping out all the materiel in our depot, hoping to be through by the
beginning of next week. Fortunately we have French soldiers to help, but they are a sorry lot
indeed. I fear, though, we judge them too severely, for when you hear the stories about the
meagerness of their rations, their apathy and general lack of stamina becomes comprehensible.
It appears that only a portion of the men’s rations are furnished by the quartermaster (bread,
wine, etc.), the rest being bought by the organization from funds provided by the government.
Sometimes such monies are naturally misappropriated, as in a recent instance I heard where
100,000 francs disappeared. However, even when such funds are handled honestly, it becomes
necessary for the army to compete in the open market with civilians, and I should imagine that
such a procedure is not very satisfactory. The men constantly complain that they do not get
enough to eat, and, though I do not doubt them, am in a position to do nothing but sympathize.
At times they work well, very well, and then their troubles catch up with them and the output
develops a sudden slump. I’m optimistic enough about human nature to believe that it is not
the men who are at fault but the times. The German P.W.’s who are loading the box cars for
us really work (on adequate American issued rations, you must remember). Most of the ones
here are big, husky fellows, giants in comparison to most of the French we are now working
with. Despite its contradictory phases, most Americans who have had much contact with the
Germans seem to rate them much higher (as workers, planners—not politically) than the rest
of the continental Europeans they have so far dealt with. That’s an ironic twist of events for
the end of the war to take, is it not?

I have received many letters from you during the past few days. I am pleased to report.
Also two packages, containing, amongst other things, the candy egg, wash cloths, peanut
butter snacks, cocoa, powdered milk, fruit juices, crackers, cheese spread. I wrote asking you
not to send me any books, but now, seeing the turn events have taken, you might as well ship
them along.

Probably I will be here for several months yet and I would like to use my time profitably.
No towels, soap, and items of that sort are necessary. As to whether or not I will still be here
at Christmas I cannot say yet, but probably I will. However, do not plan to send me great
quantities of gifts. Save them. I’ll be home before too many months and we’ll get together
then and decide what I need.

Kenny wrote that he had received the prints and wants to thank you for them. He is still
with the division but does not expect to stay long. Major Stratman is going to the 91st Division,
Fred Roth is with the 34th, and Ken Yancc is in Austria with the occupational forces.

I think Lt. Wurtzel will be going home very soon from the rumors I have been picking up
lately.

Regarding the tiny containers of perfume, they were not in a complete box when I mailed
them. I doubt if any disappeared.

Love,
Son

Letter 393, 1945-08-25 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 37

25 August 1945
Dear Mother & Dad,

A beautiful Saturday morning, listening to the radio and making another stab at my correspondence. I borrowed the radio from the special service office and am thus all prepared for a quiet evening at the depot. You undoubtedly have guessed that I am on duty again.

I received a letter from Albert a few days ago. He said you had brought him my correct address but would not stop in.

Apparently the V you saw in the sky was a good omen. See what happened shortly after!

With the radio producing such wonderful music I'm having great difficulty in concentrating tonight. I fear this will progress little beyond the stages of a brief note. Be sure our two sets are in top rate condition, for I intend to make full use of them when I return. It has been many months since I have been free to listen as much and as often as I choose.

“Time” still sends my magazine to the 450th. I'm sending another note in a probably vain attempt to rectify the annoying situation.

Give Miss Todd my best wishes if you drive up to see her in the near future. I'll be jotting down a few words to her shortly.

Are you prepared for a redecorating spree when I get home? Even though the situation is not particularly desirable, I think we can fix it up a little bit. Is there still difficulty in having the living room furniture recovered? What colors were you considering to be most appropriate? - - - Since the last sentence I have been sitting at the desk here for many minutes, day dreaming of what we might do to improve the appearance of the interior. Naturally, I'm still looking forward to the time when we can build a home of our own. But not right away, I fear, considering the price of land, materials, & man power as it must be right now.

Love,
Son

Letter 394, 1945-08-31 (back to Table of Contents)

31 August 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

Am scribbling these few words early in the morning before I leave Lyon for a trip northward. We have completely closed out our medical depot here, save for the security cargo (alcohol, whisky, narcotics), and those I am taking by truck to scattered depots north of here—Foug, near Nancy; Mourmelon, near Rheims; Paris. We expect to be gone about a week. Then returning here to pick up our clothes and other personal belongings, we will return to Marseille to work in the depot there.

Lt. Wurtzel probably is on his way home by now, or will be shortly. Capt. Parrott has moved into Lyon with a hospital that is setting up here. I saw him only a few seconds yesterday morning.

Love,
Son
September, 1945

Letter 395, 1945-09-06 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 38

6 September 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

I'm enclosing some photos taken on one of my excursions into the Alps. One of the boys took them and made copies for me. Some are really fine but you can only fully appreciate them if you have been in these spots yourself. These were taken on the trip when my spool of film was exposed just as I was prepared to get some of those high mountain shots. These make up for the loss somewhat.

Life is easy these days, but my vacation is nearing its end. Sunday I leave for Marseille—and work. These last few days in Lyon are passing like the last few days of a summer vacation—hectic moments trying to see and do all I have postponed until now. Yesterday I bought three medals similar to those I sent several months ago and will ship them along with a great accumulation of booklets, post cards and other souveniers I have acquired but never mailed in recent months.

Love,
Son

6 September 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

Yes, I know. Another week and still no mail from me, but believe me it is not intentional. I wrote a note shortly before I left on my trip, and then carried it with me all over France. I'll send it, crumpled though it may be, just to verify my statement.

When I was gone, Ed Gallagher came to Lyon to visit me. He is coming again Saturday and I'll look for him then. I expected to leave for Marseille before that but will stay in hopes of seeing him, though he expected me to write if I would be here. I came back to Lyon last evening, so a letter would not reach him in time.

My promotion to first lieutenant came through today so now I'm wearing silver bars (Lt. Murray's) and earning $16 more dollars a month. Otherwise nothing has changed.

I mailed a box of negatives to you last week. Some of them have been printed and others not. If you can select the correct ones, go to it. Otherwise, perhaps you should wait 'til I come home to give you a hand.

All our mail has been held at Marseille for over a week and consequently I know of nothing that has been happening at home. I should have a great hoard of letters to gloat over when I arrive there Sunday. On second thought, there may be only a few. I have written scarcely any letters since the first of August.

Now, for my trip.—

The finishing moves for closing out the depot including the shipment of the security cargo (drugs, alcohol, etc.) under guard to the designated depots, as well as driving an optical repair
truck to its proper location. When everything else in the depot was in order, we loaded the supplies on a two and a half ton truck and headed north. We really needed two trucks, but managed by squeezing some of the crates into the rear of the optical unit. Sgt's Schroedermeier, Cohen, Blydenburgh and myself composed the party + our food, cots, blankets, clothes and various other items of military impedimenta.

The weather was poor. Rain attacked the first day after we had left Dijon, on the route toward Foug near Nancy. The Dijon region and north is magnificent farm country devoted mainly to vineyards which produce some of the finest wines in the world. Miles and miles of vineyards line the highways, often surrounding a great chateau that apparently is the headquarters of the organization controlling the section. The landscape is very gentle, more so than the Housatonic valley section of Connecticut. The villages where the laborers live usually are tiny hamlets that seem to be spaced fairly regularly across the countryside. Often the tiny village consists only of the rows of houses that abut the highway—two parallel strings of old, dirty stone buildings, joined one to the other like beads on a string. Those settlements that boast of more pretentions have added a few short streets that start out toward the countryside at right angles to the main stem. Of course there always is a church, usually very old, containing some architectural feature or merit of age of which the guide books can be proud. Seldom is there a sidewalk before the homes—just gravel on the same level as the highway. Now the villagers have begun to gather fuel for the winter, and the growing piles of wood attest to their energy. The exteriors of the homes usually are sad, dreary spectacles. They do have a certain charm because of their age, but the close personal observation that a photographic travel folder does not permit, will not let you truthfully say that they are appealing. The interiors, with modern furnishings, probably are more comfortable. The farms, spotted individually from these clusters of homes, probably are fine to French standards but certainly are not so to mine. Sanitation always seems to be what repels me—or perhaps I should say—lack of simple sanitary considerations. Always there are great piles of manure & straw in the dooryard and, just as inevitably mounted my chickens looking for a meal, no screening, no water systems. Life as it was lived many years ago. North of Lyon practically everyone wears wooden shoes, or sabots, walking or riding wagons, bicycles or what you will. Feeble, white haired women, shawls over their heads, toting great bundles of grass or bread or anything else that must be transported, shuffle along in these ungainly pieces of footwear. Little children playing in the streets. The farmers following the plow along the long, narrow stripe into which the land is divided. So rare is the leathershoe that is noticeable by its unusualness. Don’t gain the impression that they never wear shoes like ours, however. The sabots are the practical and inexpensive work shoes for everyday usage. When they dress in their best, they can scarcely be distinguished from any other citizen of France. The transformation is amazing. I remember seeing an instance once at the hotel in Vallorcine. The nondescript family worked about all day in simple, peasant-like clothes; but when they appeared Sunday morning attired for church, they were dressed as well or better than the average citizen in Lyon. Perhaps they are wiser than we. They wear what is practical for the occasion.

The larger towns always have more architectural attractions, even if it be only a cathedral erected in the middle ages. Usually, however, there much more. The narrow, cobbled streets, dirty but interesting; the uneven roof lines; fortified city walls; graceful bridges; the city halls. Sometimes, just a piece catches your eye. A bit of metal scroll work. A deep-set archway of beautiful design; sculpture at the corner of a building. In the country it is not the detail but the
color that proves most interesting. Nestled villages in the trees. The silhouette of the church spire against the skyline. A line of poplars across the horizon; the regular outlines of the strip farms.

We drove thru Lorraine, the Joan of Arc country, but though we passed near her birthplace at Domremy la Pucelle, we did not stop. I doubt if that village differs much from the others except for the few improvements that fame may have forced upon it. On the return trip thru the same region we saw one large flock of sheep, herded by a youngster and two dogs, that called to mind one of Joan's most renowned daily duties—caring for her father's sheep. Much of Lorraine does not seem to be very densely populated, probably because the land there is more suitable for the herder than the farmer. No wonder that young farm girl heard voices & saw visions. She had to have something to keep her mind occupied during the long daily vigils, alone on the pasture lands except for the animals.

The army has developed an excellent system for feeding the troops passing through northern France. Unfortunately it has not spread to their region. At convenient intervals along the main routes “G.I. Joes” have been established for dispensing coffee and sandwiches to the travelling troops. They are manned by German P.W.'s (in fact, I have yet to see an American guard at any of them, though some must be present) and seem prepared to accommodate any number of men. Some are simple. Some more elaborate. Mustard, pickles, relish, onions all were available for garnishing the sandwiches. Some of the regular transit camps along the route serve regular meals—meat, potato, vegetables, coffee, bread, butter, cake, etc.—to any who stop in. When you have experienced the difficulties that at times are encountered when trying to eat while travelling in the army, these arrangements come as definite blessing. The originator of that idea deserves great praise.

We reached Foug the first night and stayed at the medical depot there. Unfortunately they had reconsigned our shipments to them to the depot at Mourmelon near Rheims and would not accept the security cargo. To Mourmelon we proceeded. They would not accept the security there for they had no vault. They were willing to take the optical unit, but that was filled with security cargo also. To Paris that evening, where we dumped the alcohol, etc, and had the clutch on the 2 ½ repaired.

Naturally the boys wanted to see the city and we therefore made a slight delay of two days. Paris does not hold my interest particularly, but I managed to have a good time. Food was a problem for me (except for what we had in the truck, which was at the end of the subway line), and sleeping. I wrote the boys passes and with them they managed to get hotel rooms through the Red Cross. Then they sneaked me in also. I revisited many of the spots I had seen previously, and in addition added a few more to my acquaintance. First, the Eiffel tower. I rode the elevator to the first level, then climbed the stairs to the second, looked about a bit and climbed down to the first level again, expecting to return to the ground by the elevator. But the elevator took me back to the second level again. I raced out and around, got in the same car I had just ridden up in and finally managed to arrive on terra firma.

On Monday in France practically everything closes, museums and all. I had hoped to visit the small section of the Louvre that is at present open to the public, but that concurred to French custom also. This perhaps was a fortunate move, for it led to the casual introduction to a war correspondent for the San Francisco Chronicle, Conway or Clancy by name. He also was one of those disappointed in seeing admittance, so we joined forces and set off to look about together. However the rain had followed me, even to Paris, and forced us to seek shelter in a
café where we spent the remainder of the afternoon talking over a glass or two of wine and beer. He proved to be most interesting, showed me some unset jewels he had picked up from a German merchant, told me about his training for work in the Orient & eventual rejection because the army had discovered his connection with the labor movement in San Francisco, the spending orgy of the Russian soldiers, paid in Berlin for the first time in three years. He also gave me the name of a professor of history, Dr Kewatt of Cornell, that he thought I might like to contact when I return home. A wonderful afternoon of conversation. One of my most pleasant days in Paris.

Late Monday afternoon we left Paris, heading back to Rheims. Twenty or thirty miles outside the city we pulled the vehicles off onto a side road, cooked our supper, set up our cots in the back of the then empty 2 ½ and spent a comfortable night. The early start Tuesday morning would have brought us to Rheims by noon had not I been so busy talking that I took the wrong road. Just as well, though, for the mistake permitted us to get rid of the optical truck at Mourmelon before visiting Rheims. Rheims now is very crowded and was not particularly interesting except for the famed cathedral. After dark we set out to find a secluded nook in which to sleep, and eventually ended up in the woods near Mourmelon. I slept in the open under the pines. Oh, for the life of a gypsy.

I did not take a guided tour of the cathedral but I spent a good deal of time looking it over myself. None of the great cathedrals inspire much religious awe in me, but it is the beauty of the architecture and decoration that seems so marvelous to me. Though it seems wonderfully symmetrical from the distance, and is, architecturally speaking, a close view dispels any belief that it was produced by any production line methods. Each figure, each pedestal, each gargoyle, each statue is a piece of individual artistic creativeness. Each one different. Each one portraying the artist’s individual conception and contribution to the structure as a whole. As a gallery of statuary it is wonderful. As a religious edifice it means little—a contribution of worship to his God. It was his mite, his token of reverence. To really appreciate its religious essence the observer should perhaps see it in this light and then perhaps he would have some comprehension of its meaning. To the builder, it meant his form of worship. To the observer today its religious concept is lost in the admiration of the artistry. Perhaps that is the lesson that should be learned. Religion is an individual matter. It cannot be vicarious and still meaningful to the individual. Perhaps Shaw was right when he said that Joan of Arc, so much of whose history centered about that very building, was really the first protestant, for her actions proclaimed the individuality of worship.

Yesterday we surprised ourselves and all the way from Rheims (Mourmelon) to Lyon. Thus ends the saga of another of my voyages.

Love,
Son

Letter 396, 1945-09-10 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 38

10 September 1945
Dear Mother & Dad,

Last evening, for hours it seemed, I read the letters from home that had been accumulating here in Marseille for almost two weeks. The latest were yours of the first of this month. I arranged the whole pile chronologically by the post marks and then read them consecutively. Almost like a book of the daily happenings in Danbury.

I'm glad I waited until Sunday before bidding Lyon farewell. Though I feared he might not come, Ed finally called at the hotel at seven o'clock. He had made a date for the evening, but came back about midnight and stayed almost until four in the morning. It was wonderful talking to someone from home after all these months.

Our trip from Lyon on Sunday was very pleasant. We made two long stops on the way. The first was at Orange, where we took a long look at the remains of a well preserved Roman theater. It is still in excellent enough condition to permit modern outdoor presentations there each summer. Then on for a few more miles to Avignon to visit that famous walled city, its equally famous bridge and the Palace of the Popes. We were late for the regular tours but took a later one (supposedly to be at 5 o'clock, but actually nearer 6). The edifice was constructed at various periods during the 1300's and was most interesting to me because of the wonderful condition in which it has been preserved. In fact, it was my first experience in a “castle” that still had its walls and roof. Most of those still showing evidence of their previous existence along the cliffs guarding the Rhone valley are now but shells of masonry and uneven mounds of earth. You can guess their former extent by the bits of the fortifications, towers, gates, etc. that still remain, but otherwise their glories have long since passed. The magnificent palace at Avignon, however, still stands practically as it was erected. Undoubtedly it is not typical of these family chateaux that still are scattered about, for this one had the wealth of the church supporting its erection. However, it was typical enough to give the modern visitor a picture of medieval days—great staircases and halls, towers, slit windows, barricaded doors, courtyards, narrow stairways mounting to the ramparts, vast kitchens, the necessary giant fireplaces. You know how I go in for that sort of thing.

Herb is still in the staging area so it will be some time before he reaches the states. I sent word out to him that I hoped he would come back in to see me before he leaves if he can manage it.

Don't send me any more packages. All those with 70 points or over are supposed to notify the folks at home to comply with this so the mails will not be crowded with unnecessary parcels at Christmas time. I have my doubts about leaving before then, but it is just as well that you do not send me any more things to weigh me down. I want to be prepared to move when the time comes.

I'm having a difficult time trying to decide about applying for school over here. The difficulty is that I might be able to leave for home sooner if I stay here in Marseille and it might not make any difference. I've almost decided to take the chance and try to go to England. Probably I never will get to England any other way, and that aspect, along with the study, might be worth the few weeks I might lose by going. The army talks wildly about all over 70 being on the way home before Christmas, but I have heard such statements before and rather doubt the accuracy of the words. I have to include my credits in my application, so if they consider
Dear Mother & Dad,

Herb still had not left for home from the staging area here in Marseille. He was at the depot for lunch today and believes that he will be shipping in the next two or three days. You can expect him to call on you sometime after he gets to Bridgeport.

My job at the depot has kept me busy all week, so once again my letters have been few. I am working in the breakdown section now. That department breaks open all miscellaneous boxes, classifies the contents and sends them to the proper warehouse sections. For some reason, a great backlog of material has been collecting and now we must see that it is taken care of.

I have applied for school at Shrivenham, England, but will not know for some time as to whether or not I have been selected to attend. I hope I can make it, if only for the trip to England itself.

I have written before that Marseille does not particularly appeal to me—dirt, crowds, odors, heat—not pleasant. However, you can always find scenes to hold your interest. A thriving black market flourishes openly in the very heart of the city. Near the U.S. parking lot, a large open area has been left vacant, and here, at any hour of the day, mobs of Frenchmen and representatives of the many nationalities in this port city, throng in milling crowds. Never can you see anything exchange hands. All transactions apparently occur in the center of the mass of humanity. The outside is an almost solid line of “marche noir” outlookers, or those preparing themselves for transactions in the inner sanctum. Some oriental gambling games progress in little knots surrounding a small cloth mat. French gendarmes are always present, as well as American M.P.’s to see that no American troops are involved in the deals. French magazines carry articles condemning the activities, occasionally the participants are rounded up by the police, but only for a few minutes are the markets closed. It continues to operate, full blast, in the open. Not even the blind could miss it.

We have a radio in our room now, left by a previous occupant. It appears to be a signal corps machine, but serves its purpose, though for some strange reason we cannot get the broadcasts originating here in the city. London is much easier to reach.

I believe I’ll try to do a bit with my history this evening. Occasionally I take a few notes to add to my very slowly enlarging collection of words. The army just isn’t the place in which to try to concentrate.

Thanks for the 88th patches. So far I have never received any from the fellows in the 88th,
probably because most of them have been transferred to other organizations.

Love,
Son

15 September 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

The latest computation of my credits gives me 70 points, and 70 only by the skin of my teeth. That should mean that I could possibly arrive home much sooner than heretofore expected. I was, of course, anxious to get home, but always kept the reservations in mind that I would prefer to stay overseas in the army than spend a similar amount of time in the states in some isolated army camp in the middle of nowhere. Now, according to a recent Stars and Stripes article, MAC officers may be discharged if they have been made in the figures. I make the grade by one day only. For the first time since coming in the army, I can see some hope of being discharged in the near future. However, I still will accept an opportunity to go to school in England for eight weeks if I can make it. Perhaps never again would I have the chance to visit England and I would hate to lose the chance. It would mean only a few weeks difference in time, and I am sure that it would serve as credit for my M.A.

Yesterday Mr. Boucher (our new warrant officer, formerly our first sergeant) & I drove to Arles to see the sights there. Arles is one of the most famed towns in southern France, still boasting of remains of the Roman days, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance as well as fame of its own modern times as the headquarters of the Provençal movement headed by Fredric Mistral. The weather was terrifically hot, but still we climbed about on the amphitheater and the theater that is little but ruin today. The most interesting building for my taste was the church of St. Trophime and its famed cloister, though the Roman and Medieval cemetery and the Abbey of Montmajor cannot be slighted. The most pleasant discovery that I made was that even in the narrow back alley ways you can walk without the stench forcing you to speed your way. Its location, on the edge of that desert-like land at the mouth of the Rhone, light tinted, sun baked buildings, brilliant sunshine, narrow streets, civilians still wearing the traditional Provençal costumes, the home of Van Gogh and very obviously the source of much of his inspiration, its remains, its museums of the ancient past, as well as those honoring the culture of the Provençals, all understandably combine to make this ancient capital of Gaul one of the most noteworthy spots in this region.

No, do not send me any more packages, except of course, small 8 oz. parcels of film. I have no idea of when we will leave, or when or if I will be going to school. I prefer not to have packages trying to follow me all over Europe and perhaps back to the states. Will you give this same news to any that you think might be considering mailing packages to me in the near future. Even if I am not home by Christmas, I still would prefer that you do not try to send me any gifts. I'll be home soon enough to take care of such matters personally without giving the postal authorities any additional difficulties.
Fran Austin is still near Marseille. I had a note from him a couple of days ago but as yet have not been free to visit him. I'll try to do so before long, however.

Kenny sent me a snapshot he had taken in Venice. I thought you might like to see it.

Love,
Son

Letter 399, 1945-09-23 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 38

23 September 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

For the past several days I have had a headache each evening, probably caused by a slight sinusitis. Truly I did not feel like writing. Usually I went to bed early instead and listened to the radio.

Perhaps it is time for the rainy season to begin. We had a very light shower here this morning and then the weather returned to its normal brilliant self. We drove about the city an hour or so today, climbing to the church that dominates the city from its commanding position on a bare, rock cliff. The horizon was hazy, but the city itself was clearly visible.

Undoubtedly you have been wondering as much as I as to what all the recent war department and theater announcements concerning discharge really mean. You can guess. I won't believe that I am returning home till I see the boat leave the harbor. I have seen too much of army efficiency to trust as speedy a return as is predicted. And remember, too, that all such announcements pertain to enlisted men only, not to officers. It is the uncertainty that makes the waiting so difficult. (I am still hoping for the eight weeks of school in England but am not too hopeful). We have transferred many of our men with points above seventy to organizations scheduled for a quick return and have received in return, men whose scores range much below 60. Perhaps the officers will be forced to remain behind with them until they also are ready to leave. Lord knows. We can't figure it out. I know some officers who have been on their way for weeks and still have not left Marseille—and their scores are in the vicinity of 100.

Don't worry about the July bond. The others hear that theirs have not arrived either. It should be along presently.

I have not heard from Martha in months and consequently have not written to her in almost the same length of time. It seems that she might find a few minutes occasionally to drop a line or so.

Do not send me any more packages. I wrote this before. Am repeating only in case the previous letter did not reach you.

What is Jim Birtles' new address? Or has he moved from Atlantic City already?

Love,
Son
Letter 400, 1945-09-25

25 September 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

The seasons are in transition tonight. The hot winds of summer have most suddenly been transformed by the mistral blowing down the valley from the north into harbingers of winter's cold. The harbor is a mass of white caps, and when the wind whips the seawater against the rocks that border the corniche, along which is located our villa, the spray often reaches the street level above. The stars have a snap that was missing during the heat of the summer months, and the islands and the arms of land that protect the bay stand out more distinctly than ever before. Weather like this reminds me of home, probably because the cool late autumn days are my favorite memories of New England. Yes, this time of the year I enjoy the most. The pushing winds give me a “boost” that I always need after the summer's enervating heat.

I still have now word concerning my application for school in England. If I am to go, I should hear within the next few days. I do hope I can make it, for I'm sure it would put me in stride again either for teaching or studying.

The latest news had not yet rescinded the previous unauthenticated report that MAC's with 70 points can be discharged. I definitely do not want to stay in the army and be in the states. I would prefer a few extra months here in Europe to some isolated camp in the sticks.

Our nightly schedule of ice cream production has been obstructed by the winds. Part of the electric system furnishing power to the lower floors of the house has been “decommissioned” and with it the refrigerator. It won't taste too bad as chocolate milk, I'm sure.

Do you have our servants primed for my return? Our abundance of German P.W.'s to make our beds, clean our rooms, serve our meals and work with us in the depot has made me assume the position of an aristocrat—if you believed such a thing possible from my Yankee democricity. The Jerries do not seem unhappy in this new position in the depot. They do little more than our boys do or have been doing except that they cannot leave the confines of their quarters except while on duty. All they miss is Marseille, and that is little to worry about.

Love,
Son

Letter 401, 1945-09-27

27 September 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

My plans for schooling in England have come to naught. No one that I know who had submitted an application was selected. Probably they considered that my 70 points meant that I should be on my way before the 8 weeks are up. Frankly, I believe I shall still be here. Perhaps I shall submit another request to attend school in France. As yet I have not made
up my mind about that. Probably I'll stick it out in Marseille and attend some of the evening
classes that are held here.

I had a box of clothing and books almost ready to ship off to you, but now that cold weather
has insinuated itself into the picture, I believe that I shall keep those warm duds handy. My
books I might use also.

Please don't be expecting me to appear at home any week now, for there are thousands
here who have many more credits than I and who still are trying to leave. Mr. O'Neal has a
hundred or over and still has not left the staging area. I never shall understand how the army
runs its affairs and thus I'll not attempt an explanation.

You asked about Lt. Wurtzel's nationality. Naturally, he is obviously American. His religious
preference is Jewish.

I have all the bars I need, thanks. It is much easier to buy such items now than it was while
still in Italy.

I have not yet decided where I will go for my degree, but probably it will not be Yale.
Chicago University, perhaps Columbia, New York Univ. I can't be at all sure until I can look
over their catalogues. I'm sure I won't be released from the army in sufficient time to study
during the second semester beginning in February. Probably I can get a teaching position (even
as a substitute) until school closes in June. Then I will start in September.

I received an influenza shot this morning and now my arm is beginning to grow a little
sore (evening—an O.D. at the depot).

In reference to the enclosed clipping which I am returning to you, I can comment only on
the section that refers to Marseille. The “like desert rats” may be true, for the staging area is in
a desert like region. “Working clothes” are practical for working and for leisure time activities.
I would wear them if I could, in preference to the wool O.D.'s. “No roofs” or “floors” very likely,
if you live in tents. P.W.'s “nattily & comfortably” in American dress uniforms—the Italians'
dress uniform is our uniform and they are not P.W.'s but cobelligerent labor companies. The
Germans wear second rate O.D.'s occasionally as well as combinations of their own uniforms,
but seldom does anyone look “natty” with P.W. paint in big black or white letters on shirts and
pants, both front and back. As for the Germans loafing when there was work to do, I doubt.
They work extremely well, thanks to their Nazi system of “yes” – “yes” men; but much as one
may dislike the reason behind their obedience, one must admit that they are not sluggards.

Love,
Son
This afternoon we went to the football game between the D.B.S. team at that of the A.A.C. held at the Marseille stadium. Almost like a college back home on a Saturday afternoon. We even had the bands. Only the cheer leaders and the hot dogs were missing.

Last evening Walt & I moved to another room in the floor above our previous abode. This new domicile is a big improvement, for it has some of its civilian furnishings and also has an ocean view and a large balcony. Ah, this seaside life!

If ever I get to Switzerland, I may telegraph you to arrange a call to a particular hotel. I understand that such calls can be made, and it is best to call from America, for we can carry only a limited amount of cash with us. It takes several days for the telegram to arrive and for arrangements for the call to be made.

I hear that the 81st is being redesignated as a unit scheduled to close out the supplies in the European theater. Of course, this does not mean that the same personnel will run the depot, but it may mean that we will have to stay longer than we would otherwise. MAC’s in the states with more than 30 points will not be sent over here to relieve us so probably we are stuck. All this talk about 70 points matters little as far as I can see.

Love,
Son

October, 1945
Letter 403, 1945-10-04 (back to Table of Contents)

Wednesday
Dear Mother and Dad,

The registered letter with the two sets of bars came this afternoon. I appreciate your sending them, though it wasn’t at all necessary, you know. But you did get to New York under the pretext of necessity, and that is what counts. I really wish you would do that more often, if only to get in training for the trips I am planning to make after my return.

Tomorrow night I am leaving for a four day trip to Lourdes. Though primarily the tour is for the purpose of visiting the famed Catholic shrine, I am going for the stop off at Carcassonne and the trip up to the Spanish border. All who have been on the recent trips go into exclamations of pleasure at mention of those few days, so I know the time & visit will not be uneventful. The details will come later.

We have a fine table lamp now that should offer me inducements for rejuvenating my correspondence. It is lagging again. Probably I am too wishfully planning my return home when I can tell you in person all that would take so long to pen now. It should not be too many months more.

Lt. Wurtzel should be home now and sporting civilian togs. Has he called you yet?

The impending cold, rainy season has not yet materialized. After a brief two or three day scare, the climactic situation has subsided to its pre-mistral comfort. A bit colder, perhaps, but otherwise most pleasant.
Is Jim to be released from the army in the near future? He has sufficient points to insure his discharge before too many months. I believe it should become effective almost any time now.

Practically every evening we luxuriate in a dish of ice cream. Yea, verily. We found a large can of ice cream mix and that, plus my cocoa & the refrigerator here at the villa are just the things. The temperature may be dropping but not our enthusiasm for that cold stuff.

The lights of the city, when viewed from the villa, tumble like stars on a snappy winter night. That phenomenon was so unusual that it is due to the alternating current that powers the lighting system. When nearby, the pulsations pass unobserved, but from a distance we can see each cycle. I'm not convinced, but the explanation appears plausible.

I hope you have passed on the word to Mildred, Mrs. Shiff, etc. concerning Christmas packages to me. Please try to prevent them from mailing anything this season. If I arrive home by the holidays, that will perhaps never reach me. If I stay here, I will be burdened with the excess baggage when I do leave for the states. I would be happier without any of those reminders this year. I should be home soon enough so that you can hold out for couple of months longer at least.

My cold has long since passed. I'm back to my usual grumpy self with not even a cold to blame for my irritation.

Love,
Son

Letter 404, 1945-10-05 (from Walter Rose) (back to Table of Contents)

5 Oct 45
Dear Mrs Warner

Truman left last night for a five day leave in Lourdes, and not having time to send this money order he asked if I would handle it.

Just for the records I am Lt. Rose, Truman's room mate. We have been paling around together since I joined the outfit last Jan.

I hope you wont feel that I am being forward when I say that I feel as tho I know both you and Mr Warner, for Truman speaks of you often.

Perhaps if we are lucky enough to return together I may have the pleasure of meeting you.

Respectfully,
/s/ Walter Rose

Letter 405, 1945-10-10 (back to Table of Contents)

10 October 1945
Dear Mother & Dad,
The mail has been fair the last few days, several letters as well as the package of films. I really needed the latter, for my recent sightseeing trips had seriously depleted my stock.

Lt. Rose is leaving for the staging area tomorrow. He has 77 points and so should be on his way home in a few weeks. His departure puts me back in the company commander's seat, from which position I am hoping to be relieved as soon as replacements appear. I am hoping that his leaving is a sign that I may be on my way before the end of the year. Don't count on it, however. Even four or five weeks may see me in the staging area awaiting shipment, or just as likely, I may still be working at the depot. Still don't send me any Christmas packages. I'm sure I'll be home soon enough so that they would serve only as extra burdens.

I hope Lt. Wurtzel arrived as planned. Lt. Rose said that he would call you when he gets home if he docks at New York. If you should receive an unexpected, long distance call, don't get excited thinking it is I. It might be just some friends calling to tell you I am still banging around Europe. If I am to leave for home in the near future, I'll try to let you know as soon as I possibly can. As soon as I learn anything definite, I'll write the details.

My trip to Lourdes was very excellent. However, I won't attempt it now, for there is so much to tell about that journey, that this brief note cannot do it justice. An involved argument concerning the comparative values of heavy and light automobiles has my head spinning. I'll try a real letter in the morning.

Love,
Son

Letter 406, 1945-10-11

Dear Mother & Dad,

When I went with Walt to the staging area at Calas this afternoon, I looked for the organization that Fran was last reported to be with. Believe it if you will, he still has not sailed, but is still cooped up waiting to board a westward bound vessel. Several times they have been ready to go and then their places have been assigned to others. It looks now, however, as if they will be leaving in a very few days. We talked about a half an hour or so, once I had finally found him washing his clothes. He said he would be to see you when he reaches Danbury again.

I have located some color film (German) that I would like to try before I leave France. I have no idea of how to use it, but I'll pull off a few cassettes of the film and see what the results are when I get home. It is difficult to have such film developed here, and I dare not send it in a package for fear the x-ray mechanism used by the P.O. for uncovering forbidden loot would spoil the exposures. I'll keep them in the extra bobbins I have and carry them in my baggage.

In a few days I shall begin the arduous task of packing my extra possessions and shipping them off to you. I hate to begin, but I must do so before time grows too brief.

The rain and cold weather I predicted several weeks ago have not yet materialized. Last year, at approximately this very time, the climate was miserable—wet, cold and dismal. I remember it well, for in a week or so, it will be one year that I have been existing in France.
Well on my way to meet those citizenship requirements.

Walt is back tonight for the accommodations at Calas were not convenient for him this afternoon. He is returning in the morning.

If I can get back before too long, I believe I shall try to teach for the rest of the year in hopes of getting my permanent elementary certificate. Then probably go back to school next fall. My permanent certificate would be a valuable possession, for then I could always fall back on elementary school if my other plans fail. What do you think of this idea?

Love,
Son

Dear Mother and Dad,

Once again I am the O.D. and have to stay at the depot all night. It has been very quiet and so I will attempt to stumble over the keyboard and hope for legible results.

Ever so often I have the urge to write some of my experiences for post war reference, but somehow my plans never resolve beyond the resolution stage. In Lyon Lt. Mooneys suggested and excellent and most appropriate title for such martial reminiscences – “The Army of Preoccupation” essays, for then I would be free to ramble about anything that came into that section of my anatomy facetiously misnamed “brain”. The topics of the aberrations of my thinking could range from French drivers, European scenery, the impressions left by the soldiers of our army on the Europeans, army education systems, history seen in the raw, Texas, characters encountered, army orders concerning discipline, black market activities from the brass to the private, regular army men, to religion. Anything I happened to think about as long as it centered on some aspect of the U.S. troops on foreign service.

I promised at one time to tell you of my trip to Lourdes. I'll make a stab at it now.

A pilgrimage to a religious shrine, if Chaucer has provided us with a fit example, should be made with amiable companions. Army regimen does not always allow a free selection of one's associates, but, fortunately, from the motley crew of infantry officers anxious for a leave, nurses who had been celebrating their departure for nine or ten hours, and the scores of other commonplace pilgrims, I could not have been favored with more suitable compartment mates. A trio of army chaplains (Catholic priests they later revealed themselves to be) descended on this unsuspecting sightseer. The first evening was uneventful, for the 2330 departure had drained even the most inveterate traveler's energy. Soon all, with the eventual submission to fate that all army personnel acquire, propped themselves into suitably cramped positions and began to doze, lulled by the swaying of the cars.

Frankly, my interest in this excursion planned by the French for acquainting the G.I.'s with southern France, was not that of a deeply religious personage. My reasons for the trip were threefold. First, I had long hoped to visit the fame medieval city of Carcasonne, and that magnificent stone construction was included in the itinerary. Second, my passion for
mountainous country instinctively led me toward the Pyrenees. Third, a brief passage in the recently read, “The Education of Henry Adams” concerning the force of the Virgin at Lourdes, intrigued my curiosity. No, I definitely went to Lourdes as an interested observer, not as a participant.

My soldier-priest companions were of the Bing Crosby, “Going My Way” type, jovial, human, companionable. My Puritanical, New England background has not yet been sufficiently dissipated to leave me unsurprised when I contact a man of religion who offhandedly smokes, drinks and even swears a bit if the situation calls for such action. The old school Protestant ministers just don’t do such things, at least openly, nor do many of the reactionaries of the Catholic faith I am told. I could not help but think of some of the jolly friars that bounce so realistically through European literature of Medieval times, really sampling life instead of smugly setting up a code of ethics that they believe correct and condemning any deviations therefrom. Though such actions may make an individual more “human”, even the Catholic clergy and the Catholic followers fail as religious practitioners just as do their Protestant counterparts. Each has its minor dogmas, its blue laws, its metaphysical theorizing, its unimportant sins, its artificial ceremonies to obstruct its vision as to what it could really accomplish in the matter of social relationships. A tiny slip can be readily noted, condemned and punished. A major step that is increasingly complicated as its value to human progress increases seems to touch on too many worldly matters, treads on too many influential toes, involves too much sacrifice for even the altruistic church to face. It is so much easier to think about the little matters. If you talk and think about the really basic issues you must think only in theory.

A Catholic chaplain, a regular army colonel, is in charge of the activities at Lourdes, and he sees to it that the troops behave themselves in this shrine that is so sacred to him and his copractitioners. Unfortunately he approaches the problem from the angle of making a good appearance before the French who flock here from all over Europe, rather than behaving because it is the thing to do. I suppose it is the most expedient approach, but to me it is on the hypocritical side. Personally, he seems to be a human dynamo, alone organizing the tours and programs within Lourdes itself. The French who originated the tour plan that one should see the surrounding countryside as well as the city itself, but his main interest is the shrine. Of course there are many of other faiths than Catholic on the trip, so his plan for impressing the French must go somewhat awry. Naturally I wanted to see as much as possible, so I missed many of the religious services and probably got as much out of the trip as anyone.

I believe you saw the film “The Song of Bernadette”, based on Franz Werfel’s novel about the visions that appeared to the young French girl here. For its accuracy in representing the scenes and personages of that it is wonderful. I saw the movie for the second time here at Lourdes and was truly impressed by what an excellent job the producers have put forth. The countryside, the grotto, the town, the river, the bishop, Bernadette, all are accurately patterned after the originals.

I must truthfully admit that never before have I witnessed such religious fervor that seemed so sincere. Those Catholics who come here with trust in the possibilities of miraculous cures really have faith or put on an amazing piece of self deception. It is at the grotto that most of them pray, some kneeling for hours with outstretched arms and ending their vigils by fervently kissing the cement slabs that now surface the earth before the grotto. The water from the spring that miraculously appeared after Bernadette dug into the earth with her bare hands, has now been diverted to baths and taps at the left of the grotto where the faithful bathe
themselves and drink from the water. Most carry away several bottles of this liquid of potential liquid miracles. Cures are regularly being reported – youngsters who could not move, sight restored, the lame walk unaided, all purportedly scientifically investigated by a committee of medical personnel. 

Do not get the impression that the cathedral at Lourdes is like an ordinary cathedral where there are crowds at regular services and the rest of the time the area is relatively deserted. By no means. From early morning ‘til late at night throngs pour in and out of the gates that lead into the holy ground. I have never yet seen the grotto when there were not large groups of people praying or drinking the water at the taps. At all time there is a bustle of life in the vicinity. Mass is held at all hours of the day. At the Ave Marie service at night there literally are thousands of people, marching about the grounds bearing lighted candles and singing their Ave Maries and singing whole heartedly, too. The repetitious Ave Maries become almost hypnotic in their effect. I found myself humming along with the chanting, began to wonder how much of the others interest and participation was based on this power rather than on sincere belief. If I, who know little about the meaning of such Catholic ceremonies, felt impelled to become a participant, how much more deeply led must be an individual who has been indoctrinated with the efficacy of such practices since childhood. While there, all the participants undoubtedly were absorbed, outwardly, in their rites. On the return trip my priest friends gave me another view of the mind of the candle bearing worshippers. One part of the parade involved tortuous serpentinings in the great square before the entrance to the lower church. They became involved in a duel of pushing each other at the corners (with their hips) in hopes one would miss the sudden turn and walk into the civilian who was guiding the procession. What was happening in the minds of the others I can only guess. 

Unfortunately, the town itself has assumed a Coney Island atmosphere, what with all the store and booths established for selling religious articles. Outside the grounds the religious atmosphere is gone and a mercenary attitude settles down on the population. Money, in the form of restaurants, hotels and religious items is the business of the natives. To them it is entirely a business proposition. Just note the business title of one of the shops: St. Patrick O'Toole, Dooley.
Britain to France to Italy. At this moment operatic excerpts in English are very revealingly acquainting me with many new visions in that field so usually sung in anything but English in America. Why can’t we use a few translations ourselves. The Oriental tonal scale of the music that is beamed from North Africa still amazes me, though I find it not at all unpleasant. The French programs I can follow slightly, if the conversation slows down to a quick trot. Always one can listen in on the short wave broadcasts that England regularly sends to the various commonwealths and colonies under its jurisdiction.

The prospects for a quick return are dampened this evening by the reported return of the passenger liners to England. Everyone is quick to resent that action, forgetting that there are many British troops that also have to travel thousands of miles before they can return to their homelands. We must not expect everything for ourselves.

The harbor is thick with fog tonight, so dense that only the most piercing lights from the city reach us here out on the Corniche. Looking down from the sundeck onto the few dark figures wandering the shrouded thoroughfare below, one sees a scene that is often associated with the thrillers in the movies. Even the washing of the waves on the rocks and the halos about the street lights are there. In fact, such atmosphere is not out of place in this city, for its reputation as a den of thieves and criminals: is again proving true. Most of the troops here are not anxious to walk around in many sections of the town after darkness envelopes the streets, for the murderers and robbers are regaining their notorious influence. Occasionally even American troops are killed or wounded in the fracases that ensue, though little or no publicity is given to such incidents in the army papers. Our depot section seems to be a mecca for excitement at times. One colored boy was killed near one of the cafes in a contiguous block last week. Sporadically the guards have trouble with French attempting to steal, some of the medical supplies that are stored in the open. Last night the guards reported rifle or pistol shots in the vicinity, but saw no actual trouble except French gendarmes prowling through the section with flashlights. Don’t worry. I always carry a pistol when I inspect the guard.

I believe that I shall make a package of my books and postcards, etc. and get them off before too long. Getting ready for my eventual return you see.

Love. Son
will be a great addition to my greatly diminished supplies. I dived heartily into the contents of
today’s groceries, sampling the rusks and the melba toast cheese Danish sandwiches. The jelly
arrived in good condition, along with the tuna, chicken and sandwich spread.

I realize that I have not been writing often enough to keep you from worrying, but I know
you should have received more than two letters written in September. Our mail two [sic] is
arriving most irregularly and slowly. When I hear some of the remarks that some families
make to their sons about not writing, or about what they plan to do etc. I cannot but help
to realize even more than usual how fortunate I am in having such a mother and dad as you.
It makes my stay over here so much more easy knowing that you trust me to judge wisely in
my decisions. Perhaps you are too trusting in the extent of my sagacity, but it is comforting to
know that you think I will always do what is best.

Don’t be too trusting of all those newspaper accounts of speedy return to the states of those
of us who are still here. Frankly, I believe that much of the army’s optimism is intentionally
false and is aimed at quieting the clamor of the public for that speedy ocean crossing. Now
that the clamor has been muffled by promises they are seizing every opportunity (striking
longshoremen, the return of the passenger ships to England) to lay the blame on someone
else. I am not convinced that the authorities were not aware that those vessels were to be
returned. Be that as it may, the few vessels involved in the deal are not sufficient to cause
such radical changes in the sailing schedules. How much more above board it would be to
have admitted at the beginning that such a quick transport of men that the public desired was
impossible, showing facts and figures, and let the record stand on its own. I doubt now that I
will make it by Christmas, but I have not given up hope entirely.

V-Mail for the European theater has been officially stopped now, so that will put a stop to
my easy method of catching up with my correspondence that so often fell weeks behind—as it
is now.

No, do not send me any books. Keep them so they will be readily available when I get
home.

Don’t worry. I am feeling fine and unfortunately am beginning to put on too much weight.
Too little exercise and too large meal and too many snacks at night. Let me assure you that I
am not wasting away.

Sorry you missed Herb, but by now you most certainly have meet him. I’m sure he is tickled
pink to be a civilian again. Before too many months I should be in that category also.

Did you ever think seriously why you are as you are, why you think as you do, why you
have certain tastes and interests, what it was in your environment that bent you to be as you
are? I’ve discovered that I have a great deal to blame you for. Probably if you had not taken me
on those trips through New England when I was younger I would not enjoy scenery the way I
do. Many have seen so much of the out of doors that they declare that they never want to see
an open field again. Of course, that is a slight exaggeration on their part, but basically they
mean what they say. As for me, even under the most trying circumstances, I found that I could
enjoy the beauties of nature and be buoyed up by them rather than be discouraged. If you had
not taken me walking and pointed out the trees and animals to me, I probably would not be
such an addict for hiking in the country. If you had not bought so many magazines on home
decorating and architecture, I’m sure that odd moments that now are spent in dreaming up
the plan and decorative scheme of my dream home would be wasted in less pleasant mental
wanderings. Definitely the foundation for my taste in simple and unfortunately expensive
items is your fault. Those books you always bought me. See what a library of tomes they have
grown to into. Your attempts to treat everyone politely and look for the good in their
intentions rather than the bad, your sense of fairness and honesty, your definite standards of
ethics that you tried to live up to. See what a Puritan they have made me. How many boys
had parents that were willing to go out looking at the stars with him on cold winter nights, to
draw away from a hot fire on a winter night and ride several miles just to get a better view
from a mountain top. You never realized that you had so much to account for in regard to the
strangeness of my character and interests, did you? Yes, you’re responsible for all that and a
great deal more. Get me in a philosophic mood one night and I’ll tell you more.
11:15. Time for bed, don’t you think?

Love,
Son

Dear Mother and Dad,

Beginning at noon today the city of Marseille has been placed off limits to all troops during
the period of the inpending [sic] elections. Apparently the authorities are expecting trouble
and the army does not want the American soldiers involved. These continental elections seldom are conducted as peacefully as those in the states. If they do not agree with an opponent,
they shoot and stab in preference to debating. Monday morning the restrictions will be lifted.

I never told you much about my last trip except to describe my experiences at Lourdes. Many of the other sights were just as interesting, probably more so. Frankly, I asked for the
trip primarily to see Carcassonne, and that spot fully lived up to my expectation. In the present
day there actually are two Carcassonnnes, the old city high on the hill and the modern city along
the river. The old city is the main center of interest, it being probably the best preserved and
restored medieval walled city in existence today. We were met at the station by buses that
quickly drove up the steep hill that led to the famed stone remains. After breakfasting in
style at a hotel, we were guided by pretty, well informed English speaking guides through the
chateau and along the walls and towers. It would be senseless for me to attempt to describe
our tour of that morning without the charts, booklets and post cards that I added to my
collection. Only with the aid of pictures could I hope to give you some idea of the trip. Moats,
lists, towers, dungeons, walls, etc. are only so many words when describing a specific scene
that I know I could not do it satisfactorily. We lunched at the hotel and then boarded the train
for Lourdes.

On Sunday I took one of the special side trips that took us near the Spanish border in the
Pyrenees. Our guide on that trip told us that the natives wanted too much for renting the
mules that were considered a necessity for the last stage of the visit, so we held off. Some paid
the price. The others stayed behind or walked. Naturally, I did not stay behind. We made as
good time on foot as did those on the mules, but of course they were not getting tired while
we were. I didn’t mind however for, as you know well, I like that sort of thing. We walked
far enough to see the waterfall that was almost at the source of the stream that flows through
Lourdes. At the top of the almost perpendicular cliffs that formed the walls of the cirque was
Spain. We saw it I guess, but of that I am not definite. I believe that I heard the crack of two landslides. At least it was loud enough to resemble the snap of artillery re-echoing through the mountains. For a moment I thought that the revolution had received a revitalizing spark. Fortunately, such was not the case.

I hope that my mail is reaching you in better order now. All seem to be having the same difficulty, some not receiving any mail for several weeks at a time.

How is Richard making out with his artificial leg. You have written occasionally that you have seen him, but you never mention just how he seems to be.

I have not heard from Martha for several weeks now—or rather, several months. Barbara writes fairly regularly, so I manage to get some from her. Was Mort rejected again, I imagine. Something is fishy there, I feel almost certain. Well, so it goes.

Fran Austin should almost be home by now. He said that he would stop in to see you and give a better picture of what is happening over here than I could hope to do in my letters. He said that he would tell you that I probably will be home by Christmas, but that I doubt.

Love,
Son

Letter 410, 1945-10-28 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 39

28 October 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

Unfortunately, I am O.D. again at the depot. I am planning to catch up with my correspondence today, but as usual my hopes probably will outrun my performance. If you do not receive many letters from me do not get discouraged. I simply am not in a mood to write. This whole situation here is leaving me pretty discouraged. At night I am ready to go to bed and sleep and try to forget that I should be on my way home long before this – at least according to the fantastic press releases. I just want to get home, especially now that all my plans for travel or schooling seem to be blocked at every move. They just don't seem to follow through.

I believe that all the packages you sent have now arrived. Cake, films, chicken, and all. The last rolls of film that you mentioned perhaps have not come, but otherwise everything is here. It probably is wise to still refrain from sending any more, for it might be possible that I will leave soon, just as it is possible that I will stay here for months. Don't be too optimistic, however. I certainly am not.

The rainy season is beginning for sure now, but not very forcefully yet. Last year at this time the climate was miserable, but this October has not been particularly unpleasant. Today it has been raining fitfully, but it cannot compare with the mud and cold that greeted our arrival last fall.

I'll try to have a photo taken next week at the regular army photography shop.

I just can't write any more. I'm so disgusted and discouraged. Tomorrow perhaps I can do
2 November 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

It had been several days again since I last wrote, but I imagine that you are used to that routine by now. After coming home at night (and usually stopping in to see a movie before) I climb into bed and talk or listen to the radio. Somehow I just don't see to get around to that letter writing business. Perhaps I am looking forward to that return trip and am holding off in order to be able to tell you all about these last few weeks in person.

As a slight recompense of working last Sunday, I took off from the depot this afternoon for a short jeep trip. Sgt. Key, the acting first sergeant, Zack, the company clerk, the jeep driver and myself composed this party. This section of France has numerous legends of Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, Martha, and Sarah that have become almost a part of local history. One tale has it that a group consisting of Marie-Jacobe, sister of the Virgin, Marie-Salome, their servant Sarah, Lazarus, Martha, Mary Magdalene, and Maximin, driven from Judea by the persecution, landed at a spot in southern France now known as Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. After their arrival here, Ste. Madeleine went to the spot known now as la Sainte Baume to perform penitence, and it was to that region that we made our journey this afternoon. St. Baume is in an isolated region high in the mountains east of Marseille. The approach is by a narrow but well constructed road that winds in torturous twistings up the sides of the sparsely forested hills. Fortunately a jeep is well planned for hard pulls. An ordinary passenger vehicle might have encountered difficulties, especially in making some of the horse shoe bends. For miles we met only an occasional hunter with his bicycle and dog. All of the few dwellings seen now appear to be uninhabited. A few industrious woodsmen were gathering fuel in an attempt to stave off some of the bitterness of the approaching winter. Their method is interesting enough to record. A cable (it appeared so thin as to resemble a wire) stretched from the side of the gorge along which the road passed to the other side from which the wood was being gathered. The exact method we could not ascertain, but with our unaided eyes it seemed that a man was riding some sort of contraption slung on to the cable and was pulling himself along by hand, perhaps by means of a hand powered winch. Undoubtedly the wood was transported across the deep ravine by this method. As to the presence of the man on the wire we were not absolutely sure. The whole area was criss-crossed by series of foot trails maintained by the French Alpine Club. La Baume is in a small valley hidden in these heights. The grotto where Mary-Magdalene was supposed to have served her penitence is in the side of an almost perpendicular cliff reached by a series of stairways that marked the natural entrance with a church-like front, installing an altar, and cementing the floor. Apparently it is also the mecca for pilgrims in search of cures, for the stream flowing through has been diverted into

better.

Love,
Son

November, 1945
Letter 411, 1945-11-02 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 41
basins large enough for bathing of the faithful. The natural appearance has been admirably preserved by planting large trees in the small level space before the doorway. At the time of our visit we were the only persons present, but we met another jeep load of Americans leaving as we ground up the narrow path that was meant only for pedestrians. A funeral service was being held at the hotellerie in the floor of the valley, and a bell at the grotto tolled the news of the interment. We watched the silent pageantry of the double row of mourners filing into the wall enclosed cemetery from the viewpoint of the grotto.

I believe that all the packages which you have sent have now reached me, including the fruit cake. Yes, the bars have come also. I am pleased now that my request to stop the packages did not arrive before you got some more food on the way. I am looking forward to Mildred’s selection also, for I am getting low again. However, do not send any more, for I should be hearing something definite before too many weeks.

All my attempts at writing are constantly hindered by the radio. I definitely want a library and study when and if we can manage to build our own home. I have some definite ideas on what I would like to include in the plans. I wonder what you will think of them.

Love,
Son

P.S. Weeks ago Lt. Rose sent a money order for me when I was in Lourdes. Have you ever received it? I have begun to wonder what happened to it.

Dear Mother and Dad,

Sunday evening and a few minutes to type out another brief note. George and I are toasting bread on an electric hot plate. It does the job, of course, but not as satisfactorily as a regular toaster. Somehow or other it browns only in rings – where the electric coils are located. Butter from the kitchen and Danbury jelly complete the menu. Not bad really. Almost like a Sunday snack at home; but the salad is missing.

I realize that you are still expecting me home by Christmas but I feel that you are being too optimistic. Please don’t expect me by then and grow terribly disappointed if I do not appear. If I am home by then I will be surprised. If I am not in Danbury at the holiday season it won’t matter too much, for knowing that I will be on my way not too long afterward should help a bit. We can celebrate just as well on one day as on another. It is the event that counts, not the time.

Jeep riding again this afternoon, despite the heavy clouds and occasional light showers. We made the circuit of the Etang de Berre, an almost completely land enclosed body of sea water west of Marseille. Much of the land in that region is almost desert except for scrub evergreens that splotch the weather worn, white limestone countryside. Barren though it is, still I enjoy that type of scenery, perhaps because it has been so lightly altered by the human touch. A livelihood is difficult to scratch from the poor soil, but some enterprising farmers have forced a profitable yield by resorting to irrigation. Martigue, the town straddling the entrance to the
Berre I had long wanted to see after hearing it described as the Venice of southern France. Of course the comparison of a large city with this tiny fishing village is silly except for the series of canals that dissect both. Martigue, though, is a most picturesque sight, despite the poor weather we had for the visit. Fishing boats with drying nets hoisted like sails line the canals. Streets there are, but strips of water parallel them. A pivoting bridge was jammed by a barge at the height of the war shipping there, but that difficulty has long since been rectified and land and sea traffic are once again back to normal. The chief charm of the place to me was the viewing of the various vistas across the expanses of water and seeing the same scene reflected in the mirror like water. There are many scenes in this area that I would like to capture on camera, but it seems an impossibility for the color, air, and life would still be missing. Would that I could find a painting that I would like and could afford to buy. I fear I still have that expensive taste and always choose above my means.

By now Fran has probably been to visit you or at least called on the phone. I'm pleased that I was able to get word home concerning the boat on which he sailed. I wish I could be sending the same news concerning myself.

Love,
Son

Letter 413, 1945-11-07 (back to Table of Contents)

Dear Mother and Dad,

Let this serve as a warning that you may not receive letters for several days. I'm off on another trip, this time to Switzerland. I guess the possibilities of an English visit are disappearing rapidly. Perhaps I could manage it by applying for school again, but since joining the army I have learned not to turn down a waiting opportunity in expectation of one that might appear in the future. If I did not go to Switzerland now I probably would miss out on both. I'll return again sometime as a civilian when times are more propitious, and then include England in the itinerary. Major Meyers and myself are driving to Mulhouse (sp) in the command car and there will join the regular tour. Exactly how and why he managed for us to use motor transportation instead of going with the others the whole way by train I do not know but I will go along and see what happens.

Don't let me raise your hopes too much again, but this morning I was told at the surgeon's office that by the end of the month it was expected that all MAC officers with a score of 70 and over would be ready to sail or on their way. Take it for what it is worth. However, I cannot leave unless someone is found to take my place.

Lt. Rose still has not left the staging area, though he is hoping to go very shortly. However, I have seen very few boats pulling into the harbor lately so perhaps he will be delayed even longer than he now foresees. The sooner he leaves the sooner I will.

I'm not sure about not attending Yale for my master's degree, but I am seriously considering going somewhere else and then doing work toward more advance work at Yale after I begin
to teach again. As yet I have no settled plans, but I do hope to teach for the rest of the year if possible. I feel it would be wise to get back in the saddle again before doing anything as strenuous as college work again. I fear that I have grown stale since stagnating in the army.

Please don’t make any wild and elaborate plans concerning a Christmas at home. Naturally I would prefer that it be as simple as possible. Presents? Don’t even think of them. It would embarrass me not to have anything for you. Good food, home style, would please me more than anything else. That, of course, after being with you. That comes first on the list.

Love,
Son

Letter 414, 1945-11-10 (back to Table of Contents)
MS026, box: 35 folder: 41

10 Nov. 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

We are well on our way to Switzerland but have not as yet left France. Today is being enjoyed at the Swiss Leave Center at Mulhouse in the making of preparations for the journey—signing the necessary papers, changing French francs to Swiss francs, etc.

But first, a bit about the trip here. Thursday we drove from Marseille to Grenoble where we spent the night. Only a small group of American personnel is now stationed there and they are attending the current session at the University of Grenoble. Just the few hours there was stimulating for the whole town had a “university flavor”. The French there are totally unlike those in the Marseille region, perhaps because there have not been as many Americans about to corrupt them. The city itself is clean and attractive, settled down in the hills with the Alps as a backdrop. The absence of uniforms was wonderful. Just think! Thousands of people scurrying about the streets with only occasional O.D.’s marring the individuality. And scurry they do. The weather there is now invigoratingly cold and rosy cheeks and spirited step are in marked contrast to the life we left along the Mediterranean. It was almost a touch of home.

Book stores are abundant in Europe. What small town at home could you find where there are at least two or three shops, and excellent ones too, devoted exclusively to books.

Friday (yesterday) we drove from Grenoble here. The weather was poor, mist & rain most of the way. I had travelled much of the area south of Lake Geneva previously, and by the time we reached an area north of there it grew too dark for sightseeing. We ran into a real snow storm, however, and that was a novelty. The peaks, of course, are already snow clad, but where the roads normally run the winter white has not yet arrived. We took what appeared to be a short cut (on the map), a road skirting the western tip of Switzerland where it juts out into France. We could see dense clouds above us, shrouding the mountains, but only after we reached Gex did we realize that the storm would affect us. First mist – then rain – then flurries of snow – as we serpentined higher and higher. Soon the flurries changed to distinct storm and the fields had a slight covering of flakes. Even higher the ground grew white and there the snow showed no sign of melting. We picked up an old Frenchman climbing the hill and when, as the snow grew deep enough to be above our shoe tops, I asked him if the road was
passable (I had visions of snow in mountain passes) we were assured that we could continue, up we went – though not without a doubt or two. He lived at the pass at the peak and by the time we reached there everything was beautifully mounded with snow. It was wet enough so that even the evergreens were laden. Beautiful. Wonderful. Except that we could scarcely see through the windshield and had to use chains to prevent sliding. Fortunately some brave soul was ahead of us and his tracks marked the way. The descent was the reverse of the climb, the storm lessening as we gradually came down out of the peaks. I have always wanted to observe personally how a storm falls in the mountains, and there I was, seeing it in all its stages.

The center here in Mulhouse is wonderfully planned, located in what appears to have been a large military school. The upper floor of the P.X., Red Cross, etc. has been converted into a comfortable lounge for writing and reading. Picture me now sitting in a long chamber closely resembling our attic but larger and higher. The rafters have been burned to give it a pleasant finish. Tables, chairs, lamps have been installed plus decorations with a Swiss motif. It is cold here so stoves are a necessity. Small coal & wood burning fireplaces & stoves have been installed in cubicles at the four corners of the hall. I’m toasting my legs and feet around a stove as I write while my back shivers. You know what I mean.

Time for lunch.
More later.

Love,
Son

10 November 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

Whee! The second letter today. We are not leaving for Switzerland tomorrow as planned. We could not select the tour we wanted and probably would have spent the week skiing in the Alps. Not a bad idea. I’m sure I would have enjoyed it, but with so much to see in a country I have heretofore never visited, it would be a waste of valuable time. If it had been up to me, I would have acquiesced and undoubtedly would have had a wonderful time. However, the major was not to be put off, especially when it appeared that there had been some “funny work” in filling the quotas. I never would have raised a fuss. He did and it got him nowhere. Nevertheless he finally finagled another set of papers for Monday and we will try our luck then.

Alsace is definitely more German than it is French. The stores have German signs, the people more often speak German than they do French and most of the civilians have German names. Last night when I asked the directions to the Mulhouse the Frenchman answered in French until he came to the name of the city and then gave it its German pronunciation. You probably know well why this is. From 1870 to 1918 Alsace (& Lorraine) were in German hands & 50 years offers a fine opportunity of changing a people’s customs and language. Even today the people are more Pro German than pro-French. The Americans located here declare that if an occupation medal is awarded for the occupation of Germany they should receive one.
too. The higher military personnel are definitely French. The others German.

I'm enclosing some “fine” handkerchiefs that are practically useless as far as I'm concerned. You might like one. I'm sure Grandma would. The others. Do as you wish.

The Swiss trip, though sponsored jointly by Switzerland & the U.S. forces, is paid for by the individual to the tune of $35 – 5 dollars a day. Only about 50 dollars (200 Swiss francs) are we allowed to carry with us. The rest of the money that we have on our person we can carry but it is of little value for it will not be accepted at its normal value.

The Major & I are finally not going on the same trip. When we were processed he received tour 3 and I number 2. I'm sorry to be travelling alone but I'll find a companion and have a good time, I'm sure.

Love,
Son

15 November 1945
Dear Mother & Dad,

My first letter to you from Switzerland. We are staying for three days at Glion, a tiny village near Montreux where I asked you to call me. I'm hoping to hear from you tomorrow evening if you were able to interpret my cryptic cable correctly and can get the call through.

My Scotch ancestry has come to the fore here in Switzerland, for the meagre two hundred francs allowed is not conducive to prodigal spending. If all I did was expend this amount for the side trips, drinks, etc. it would be abundantly plentiful, but, like all the others, the watch stores keep me intrigued. They (watches) can be purchased so comparatively inexpensively that I know I must have one at least, and that should be a good one, so I am on the fence, counting each franc and centime as it disappears.

Don't worry, however, all my time is not spent in this miserly fashion. I'm having a most wonderful time in a most wonderful country. I can't hope to tell you all about it but here goes for a few of the happenings.

Monday morning. We crossed the border near Basle and spent a few hours there. Then on to Bern for lunch and sightseeing in the afternoon – the Capitol, the old medieval streets with arcades above the sidewalks, the bear pits, the clock tower starring a rooster, bears, golden knight, King time etc. as each hour strikes. Bern truly is the most pleasant city I have yet seen in Europe; old yet neat; clean, unbelievably clean; busy, the streets being crowded with shoppers at the well stocked stores; Architecturally it is medieval and by law is to remain so, for no one can make alterations on a building's exterior though the interior be thoroughly renovated. For blocks you may walk about the city, admiring the contents of the show windows without leaving the protective covering of the arcades except at street crossings.

The railways in Switzerland all are electric and thus are efficiently modern, quiet, swift, and clean. When a train is late or early it is unusual, almost catastrophic. When a train is scheduled to leave at 8:49 and arrive at 10:23 it does so precisely, not a minute sooner or
later. You might almost check your watches by the time schedules.

The distances in Switzerland are amazingly short and so by evening we were settled in our hotel at Thon, a quiet little town near one of this country's innumerable lakes. A local choir was practicing Handel's "Messiah" for a Christmas concert, so my evening was pleasantly occupied listening to them work on this and other pieces in their repertoire. It almost made me homesick, for the singers were so reminiscent of those in our local organizations at home & I could pick out the Adelaide Hoyts, Mary Anita's, & Barbara Cattermole's without winking twice. If only they had been using English rather than German I believe I would have asked to join them.

The languages German, French, Italian & Romansh are so intermingled that it is bewildering to a stranger. One town may be predominantly German, while the next, beyond the mountain, speaks French almost entirely. In many places all three are used interchangeably, all by the same person, depending with whom he is associating. English, too, seems to be running the others a serious threat: Great numbers are also sufficiently acquainted with our tongue to make them entirely intelligible. Many are fluent. At Thon one Swiss offered to take H. Hall and I to Zurich with him when he returned home. He had been to Thon to buy a diesel powered truck for the business he operated near Zurich. The Swiss army, like the other armies, has begun to liquidate its excess property and these vehicles were being sold at public auction at Thon, one of the Swiss army's large training centers for artillery. He introduced us to his cousin, showed us about the town, gave us his address and did his best to make our stay agreeable.

Tuesday afternoon we travelled again, this time through one of the Swiss railroad engineering feats, a great series of tunnels through the Alps. The route I will show you on the maps I have collected, but this remarkable route is not clearly understandable from a cursory glance at a map. Only until we rode parallel to that railway and had the opportunity of seeing where it clung to the mountainside and twisted through the solid rock could we begin to appreciate its magnitude.

Tuesday evening at Sierre, a small tourist village. Wednesday morning we climbed by funicular to a snow covered village called Montana, where for the first time on the trip we could say we were really in the snow. It was a quiet little town, apparently catering to tourists both summer and winter. Right now the snow is not quite deep enough for skiing, though we met an American civilian who had escaped from Austria, via Italy, to Switzerland, where he had been interned, who was making his first attempts on skis this season. I almost envied him his freedom, until he admitted he already had his draft card and was classified 1A.

Last evening we arrived here at Montreux-Glion. Today was a busy one, the morning spent in sightseeing at the Chateau of Chillon, a wonderful specimen of medieval architecture and made famous in Byron's poem. This afternoon I rode a cog railway to Rocher de Naye, a peak high above Montreux. The scenery there is "formidable", rugged, wild Alpine country, now snow capped with a sufficient covering for skiing. I fear you might not care for travelling here, for a great proportion of the travel is along routes clinging to the sides of cliffs or climbing at sharp angles. Most of the path today was through snow, deep enough so that the houses along the route were snow bound except for this rail of steel. A few souls carried skies with them and returned by that method, but all the American troops rode to the top and spent an hour and a half at the peak. The ascent to the very top appeared easy for some previous visitors had blazed a path, but the surprising slipperiness of the hill side made the climb difficult. I was
the third in line, and the relative newness of the trail made it much easier for me than those following behind. The descent was unbelievable. Once you started you usually stopped only when you fell over the one ahead of you or you just sank into snow so deep you were forced to stop. It was a cold, dry snow however, so it easily brushed off my pants and socks and out of the show tops.

Tomorrow evening we leave for Geneva but return here for the evening.

Love,
Son

25 November 1945

Dear Mother & Dad,

By the time you receive this note, I should be well on my way across the Atlantic. Events happened so rapidly after I returned from Switzerland, that I scarcely have recovered from my giddiness yet. I am in the staging area now, with the 27th Evacuation Hospital. Exactly when we will sail is difficult to say, for the organization has already been pulled off two boats. However, we believe we will be on the troop ship Exchange, scheduled for New York, probably leaving about the 27th. Keep your eye peeled for the announcement of our arrival.

Most of my clothing and personal belongings are being shipped by mail. With so little time for getting ready, I felt it would be wisest not to try to carry all my junk with me. It probably will not reach home until long after I have arrived.

Well, get that steak and onions ready. I’ve been waiting a long time for it, so it had better be hot & sizzling. Milk? Naturally.

I had planned to send you a radiogram, but all my French money has been turned in to be converted to dollars and so I simply can’t arrange it. I’ll call as soon as possible after I land.

Love, Son
Dear Mother & Dad,  

This isn’t to be one of those painfully poignant letters penned by a philosophic soldier just before the fateful battle. Those are for “This Week” in the Sunday edition of the Herald Tribune or for a full page spread in “Liberty”. Probably no one but myself will ever see this, not even you to whom it is addressed. I’m really writing this simply because I want to express some of the ideas I have and the feelings I have developed during my stay in the army. It is just letting off steam in a healthy way rather than concentrating all the venom within me and becoming a psychiatric case. It is a wonder to me that more of the unfortunate individuals who have been forced into army life do not develop even more definitely noticeable mental quirks. The army is dangerous in that respect. A natural treatment for mental disorders is to make the victim do something about his warping ideas. One can't do that here. You can see what is going wrong, understand why, know what you would do to relieve this situation and then sit back & simmer. Your opinion isn’t wanted. The all powerful know the answers, for they have in their libraries all the field manuals that instruct them in the course to follow. If the books are silent in regard to a particular question, they are silent too. One just doesn't think here. He follows orders, all newspaper accounts of individual initiative being an integral part of the American soldier being to the contrary. If you relieve the inner tensions by speaking your mind or by doing something drastic, you become officially excommunicated from active life and are confined so that you can do even less. Apparently the stress put upon creative ability and the development of scientific thinking in modern education circles is wrong, for perhaps that isn't what we, here, in America, really do want. I suppose it would make anyone in a position of authority feel he were becoming impotent if those below him in the hierarchy not only could think but could also do something about their thinking. So the tension remains, relieved only by the griping that one finds constantly amongst all soldiers and is all too matter-of-factly accepted as a necessary evil. It is a symptom of something wrong, just as a patient with a fever has something wrong. But it is never treated as such. Rather, it is left to spread & rapidly develops into lowered morale. This explanation sounds simple, almost too simple, but I honestly feel closer attention to this and the result would be greater cooperation & spirit. But here I am, again talking out of turn for when the men stage a minor revolt of unpredictable nature to let off steam, the general, the poor misinformed general, will clamp down with greater restrictions. Alas, a vicious circle of ever lessening diameter closing in on an explosive center.

Remember when Jim was attempting to teach me to play chess? Over and over again he would point out the close resemblance between chess and the tactics used by militarists in
planning & executing their campaigns. Unfortunately, he was right, for most of the military leaders play at war as if they were still at their chess boards, the unfortunate mistake being that most of the officers treat their men as if they were spiritless, carved ivory objects they pushed almost at will, anywhere, everywhere for indefinite periods. The men actually don’t resent following their leaders if they know they are not simply experimenting but really know what they are doing. But following the orders of a leader, trudging wearily, mile after mile through the heat and the dust, while he ordered them to do almost unbearable feats, while riding about comfortably in command car or jeep is almost too much. About the tenth mile after the announced length of the hike the feelings mount to an audible stage. “I’d like to get my hands on the bastard that’s leading this. Who does he think he is anyway? He’d make a damn good scout leader—maybe. Why doesn’t he get out and ride around on his feet rather than walk around in a jeep all the while. If he were walking, he’d be stopping too.”

Leadership, good leadership, demands not only authority but also understanding. All the differences in the world there is between an organization whose commanding officer is a real leader and one whose authority rests in a man of indifferent ability. The major general commanding our particular division is an example, a horrible example but a moving one. The morale here is unbelievably low and probably the cause can be traced directly back to him. Gen. Sloan (Corporal Sloan as he is unaffectionately called by his men) or Snuffy must be a miserable man. In size, both mental & physical, he is a pitiful creature. Picture a diminutive, gloved and sunglassed, little figure, so short that while sitting in the rear seat of his commodious, shaded command car, peering out at the men sweating in the open sun, his feet dangle off into space. A trivial observation, of no great value except that it helps show how insignificant he appears to his men. Some men can overcome such a drawback. Well he might also, were it not that his actions betray that his mind is comparably small. Apparently he realizes his lack of force & is compensating for it by jumping forcibly on minor, unimportant details that even he can comprehend & become master of. Truly a victim of an inferiority complex.

Making his men wear gloves and having men on guard look at every man that passes to see if the tiny flap on the bottom of his overcoat is buttoned is of small consequence, but typical of this greatest worries. If you were going in the wrong direction on the battlefield, he probably would pass by without saying a thing. However, beware of letting the all important chin strap on your steel helmet become unfastened or all hell will break loose.

Maneuvers are extremely important in the training of men for active duty, offering excellent opportunities for concentrating on battle tactics. I remember an incident that occurred while our battalion C.P. was theoretically cut off from the main body of troops by heavy artillery fire. The Aid Station was packed and ready to move with the C.P. as soon as the area was cleared. The sun was boiling, and in the shade of one of the few pine trees available the major was saying repeatedly, into the radio, “Intort blue five calling intort blue three. Come in intort blue three. Over.” “Put me through to regiment”. “What’s the situation up there.” “Let me talk to the captain at the O.P.” “Where is K company. We can’t locate K company. What has happened to it. The colonel wants to know.” “Find out at once & report back immediately.” “Roger.” Armored cars, obeying the radioed commands, dashed forward, waved their orange flags to show they were firing & then withdrew into protected positions. Couriers dashed to the front & brought back discouraging news. We just couldn’t get through. Something had to be done quickly. The general came forward from the rear to survey the situation. Having a picture of the entire situation he should have known what to do. We wondered what his decision would
be. He stopped his car by a guard who was eating ice cream he had purchased from a vendor and the invectives flew at a poor private who was trying to assuage his hunger. We still waited to learn his advice. Returning to his car he directed it be driven off, for he had made his point. He had shown himself that he could be important simply by showing his authority over men. The situation remained the same. We just couldn’t get through.

He’s not important. He’s not effective. He simply is an old maid, hopping like a little bantam rooster out of his car and clapping his hands like a flustered school teacher to get attention. He thinks he is scaring the men & thus gaining their respect. They are not frightened. They simply back down or remain quiet to preserve what little peace is still available. They don’t respect him. They laugh behind his back – colonels, majors, captains, lieutenants, non coms, privates – all. And we are to fight with this. It speaks ill for the American army.

The influence of such a man is extremely dangerous, for naturally he also influences the activities of his subordinates. Knowing he will raise a fuss over anything he can find not going exactly correct they immediately begin to cover up, to hide. A wise leader would want to know what was wrong & then take steps to correct it. You learn by mistakes if you establish a new reaction pattern that is better than the old one. But if you never bring anything out in the open but keep it hidden for fear of a garrulous incompetent leader that would give you no help anyhow, you don’t learn anything but how to keep your mistakes a secret.

The officers have discovered the best method for treating with the situation of having the general ask them to explain why they made a mistake. Rolling their eyes skyward and assuming a look of penitence & embarrassment, they snap to salute & say, “I have no excuse to offer, sir”. Then the general beams, if he can be said to beam, and replies, “Good, boy. Now you’ve learned your lesson haven’t you. It won’t happen again, will it”. But if he had tried to explain and perhaps clarify the situation, and perhaps make the experience an educative one. But that would perhaps somewhat lower the general’s prestige even if it did improve the army. The army go hang. Vive la generale!

I feel sorry for the army chaplains. Suddenly being drawn from their select group of church members and are thrust into the middle of life as they have only read about.

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**Letter 419, c. June 1944**

MS026, box: 35 folder: 41

[Undated, but probably written c. June 1944 in Italy

Probably never sent because of the battlefield description]

In a recent letter I said that I was including the films I had just received from the censors, but I failed to put them in the envelope. Today I shall try to remember to do as I say. I think you may perhaps be disappointed in the prints they sent along, but enlargements should show up much better. I am especially proud of the street scene in the nearly deserted town. That day I was climbing up to the town to its commanding position high on a hill, was also the only time I have been in a strafing raid that was right in my immediate vicinity. I didn’t go up there again.
My fingers certainly are rusty on the typewriter. Anything and everything comes out from my stumbling fingers. I make resolutions to practice until I become a little more proficient, but somehow I never seem to accomplish what I plan. This life in the army is making me one of the laziest individuals alive. I hope I’ll be able to snap out of it when I get back home.

The water which I have had heating on the stove since I began to pound out this little note has at last begun to get hot. I want to wash and shave before lunch, so I'll close now and get this off in this morning’s mail.

Love, Son
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