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Germany
V-E Day plus 10

Dear Folks and Friends,

V-E Day was especially anti-climatic for us. Our Division was the first to reach the Elbe River in this sector on 13 April. The Russians were entering Berlin only 50 miles due east, and organized resistance all around us had already collapsed. Only a pocket on the Elbe to our front and an armored task force in our rear gave us any real trouble, for about a week. After that was cleaned up, every semblance of war for us was over. For the next two weeks until V-E Day all we did was take into "protective custody" over 60,000 fear-crazed Krauts who felt the hot breath of the Bear on their already hot posteriors, and listen to the radio whenever we could. When the great news was announced, the mild excitement was good for about five minutes of conversation, then everyone went back to work.

Since then we have been gradually loosening up, shedding our combat equipment and habits, and trying to simulate a sort of garrison life. The sudden change is both strange and wonderful. It's hard to absorb all the new freedom at once. I'm still not used to the lightheaded feeling of wearing only a helmet liner, all the bright lights at night, and I still look sideways for snipers.

The end came appropriately on a soft spring day and the sun has been out ever since. This Luftwaffe airdrome we have for a home is a beautiful place, set in a pine woods. The buildings are modern, covered with vines and bordered with nice lawns, shrubbery and flower beds. My second story room has a private bath and a balcony just under the top boughs of the pines. It took a week before it occurred to me that it would be nice to move a chair out on that balcony, smoke a pipe, read a magazine and catch the last rays of the sun. But when I did just that I had a guilty feeling for some silly reason. I guess the little gremlins just don't know it's all over yet.

I suppose if we were smart like the Russians we would immediately commence to live on the fat of the land and bed down in all the available comforts. We would have valet service, a radio in every room, beefsteak, beer and a hundred little luxuries without independent and exemplary conduct. Fraternizing is still a serious court-martial offense, homes and shops are strictly off-limits. We're all spit and polish and very proper.

I often wonder what kind of an impression we are actually making. My guess is that when they see us eating dehydrated vegetables and canned meat, doing our own laundry and sleeping on canvas cots, they think we're nuts. They will know so when either the English or the Russians take over the occupation here.

Censorship has been lifted at last, so I can tell you more of the highlights in the last month. We have been along the Elbe in the area just north of Magdeburg straight west from Berlin. My headquarters in this airdrome is just east of Stendal.

Two miles east of here on the Elbe at Tangermunde is a demolished steel bridge on the highway into Berlin. When the Russians hit the capitol, droves of Krauts jammed the bridge on the east bank. The river is about 300 yards wide there and when they found that they couldn't climb across on the twisted steel, they used boats, rafts and swam across. Our guards stopped that because of the agreement with the Russians that the east bank was their territory.

I went down there for a while every day to watch this amazing end of the war. Here were thousands of our mortal enemies, still armed, just across the river. Yet for

them to fire a shot at us was unthinkable. Their one consuming thought was to escape the Russians, and we alone could give them sanctum. Like children in the shadow of the monster they cried for protection -- to us, who were there to kill them. We gave them no quarter and didn't fire at them. The guard simply discouraged any crossing by firing in the water in front of any raft or boat that tried to cross. These Krauts were in a hot-box between third and home base and a cinch to be tagged. Here was dilemma, ignominy and anomaly all rolled into a crazier climax than the most hysterical novelist could ever dream up.

On one of the first few days some Russian Yak fighters came over and strafed the Krauts. Even that didn't break it up. They moved up about 40 white ambulances and the mob got bigger. Finally an agreement with the Russians was made and we let them come over.

That was a sight to see. We gave them no help in getting across and left them to their own devices. They strung boards thru the wreckage of the bridge but it took a gymnast to get across that way. One Kraut, carrying a knapsack bigger than he was, fell off and drowned. I took a snapshot of a General inching along a plank on his belly. Some used rubber pontoons, assault boats, logs and anything else that would float. The few boats took forever to make a round trip and krauts waited in cold water up to their necks to make sure of a ride. A G.I. borrowed my binoculars and said "Crisakes, it looks like a damn shipwreck."

These were only the deserters. After about a week of this, a Brigadier and a Lieutenant General came with a white flag party to a Regimental Command post of our Division in Stendal and formally surrendered what was left of two armies. At first they insisted that we occupy their areas across the river so they could save face, but they finally agreed on the usual terms. When they were leaving, the Brigadier coyly remarked that he thought he would stay right there as long as he had brought all his stuff along anyway. The big brass gave him a dirty look but he knew when he was well off and wouldn't budge. They went back without him.

With the surrender they came over like ants. They were funneled into the bridge approach on our side and simply told to walk down the street to the shakedown point. None tried to escape even with only a handful of guards for every thousand. At the shakedown point G.I's. were searching them and throwing the weapons in a big pile. Not one complained about anything, which was unusual as Kraut prisoners ordinarily cry Geneva treaty at the slightest provocation. They were just tired of running from the "Bolsheviks" and glad to be alive.

The G.I's. had the most fun frisking officers. They knew it nettled their dignity and did a slow, painstaking job of searching every pocket and made them take their shoes off. One G.I. took a box of cigars away from a General (we had 18 that day) then handed them out to Kraut privates as they came thru the line. Each Kraut took a cigar automatically but with a startled, quizzical look. About 75 feet down the line a grinning Russian civilian was taking away each cigar as they passed him. When that happened each Kraut would look back trying to figure out the game. But it wasn't a game at all. The G.I. just had a goofy notion and the Russian was being typically Russian.

As the line progressed down the street there were German civilians, mostly women, about six deep on either side of the street. There wasn't a handwave or a smile. They just stood there looking with sad, coon-dog expressions. Some looked a little anxious like they might be expecting to see their Herman. As close as the prisoners were to their own people not a word passed from either side. When you take arms and face away from a German he's the sorriest creature on earth. Their defeat lacked even the tiniest bit of dignity.

We kept most of the prisoners here at the airport, enclosed with a single strand of barbed wire with a few roving guards and not a one tried to escape. With typical efficiency their ranking officers started a chain of command and organized the mob down to squared-off platoons. Then they rode the privates like they were still campaigning. Little Herman would click his heels together and stand there like a board while the officer shouted at him two feet away and called him a dumkopf. Germans always half shout when they talk anyway, and when they shout they sound like a Klaxon. This was going on all over the place and I couldn't make sense out of it. I asked my interpreter why they just didn't relax and take it easy. He had lived in Germany until 1938 and his simple answer was, "They're Germans. They never relax."

We talked with some of them about different things and got typical response like this: Our air bombings were pure terror attacks against helpless cities. That they were strategical targets and reprisals for bombing England doesn't occur to them; they weren't "told" that. They have no conception or ability to understand how their war has affected the "inferior" people, as they call them, or the fact that these people are actually suffering. They know nothing about the mass atrocities, never heard of them, and furthermore do not believe they happened. Not a one would admit he was a Nazi, even the obvious ones like the cold, cocky Hitler Youth -- they were all "forced" into the Army. They were all positive we would fight the Russians when we met them. The Americans had no business in the war, they were tricked into it by Churchill. Some said, a little arrogantly that we would never have been here in 1942. They kept asking if they could go home now, it was practically over anyway. One said he had nearby relatives and couldn't he go there tonight, he'd be right back early in the morning. Well, maybe you can figure them out, I can't.

We captured General Kurt Dittmar, the Wehrmacht publicity chief, in this big lot. The interrogation team said it took no pumping whatever to get him to talk; in fact it was hard to stop him. He said the High Command was convinced of defeat after Stalingrad and no doubt of it was left when their counteroffensive to split us in Normandy failed. Our air forces made the invasion possible; they couldn't get their reserves up to the front. The Ardennes counteroffensive was "a poor man's choice," the only object being to gain four months to build the Rhine defenses. That attack had cost too much and it would have been smarter to spend everything on the Rhine defenses. Hitler was still in Berlin, dynamic as ever, running everything down to the small details. The National Redoubt was only a paper idea and the war would be over in a few days. He knew they would lose but never dreamed the destruction would be so terrible. It was a fairly true statement all around, I thought.

Colonel Edward Beale and I had a private session with General Hermann Eicher for four hours one night. He was "Judge General" on the staff at Berlin, a rank corresponding to our Assistant Judge Advocate General in Washington. We were interested in the German system of military justice.

Eicher is a typical poker-back Junker. He had the marks of the "elite" military class in bearing, demeanor and Heidelberg scars -- two nice, deep ones on his left cheek, he is 65 years old, tall, with a long, severe face. His uniform was elegant, with several flashy medals. Despite the fact that we didn't fall in with his affability and gave him only a K ration to eat, he never dropped his pomp and dignity for an instant.

Without going into details, the Wehrmacht had only two courts, the central court in Berlin which tried both soldiers and civilians for high crimes like treason, espionage and sabotage, and single Division field courts, with general jurisdiction, which tried only soldiers for all types of military and social crimes, the important

thing was that the sentence of the field court was final and was executed automatically. In contrast, we have three courts in a Division command having fixed jurisdiction and limited power of punishment for offenses of varying severity, with the policy that an offense be tried in the lowest court having jurisdiction. Then we have what amounts to automatic appeal and there is a searching review of serious cases before a sentence can be executed. One interesting sidelight was that a German soldier convicted of rape ordinarily gets one to three years; our punishment is mandatory life imprisonment or death.

Along with the prisoners we got some documents. Several concerned elaborate plans for activities of the Werewolves, made up mainly of Hitler Youth. There were specific instructions on how to snipe and run, cut communication wire, blow up our bridges and important installations, contaminate our water supply and disable our vehicles. They were to continue their operations among us "no matter what happened in the war." We have had some trouble with these brats, especially with their sniping and cutting of wire, even since V-E Day, but not enough to give us real concern. We have had some men shot on the roads from nearby woods and the other day we caught four of them red-handed cutting our communication wire. These were four boys of the ages of eight, nine, eleven and fifteen. M.G. sentenced them to confinement. We caught another older boy who had planted dynamite on a pontoon bridge. Several headquarters, including caches of explosives and weapons, have been found, some thru tips from women who were fearful that their activities would bring reprisals against the community. We think we have them broken up but I still keep a watch out for these treacherous little mutts.

One day in Stendal, our Division band set up on the lawn in front of the C.P. A lot of civilians gathered but no one knew what the show was for. After a while a string of sedans pulled up and the band blared out the "Internationale". Out of the cars stepped ten Russian officers, who with all our men, faced the music and saluted. When the music stopped there was a spree of handshaking and backslapping all around, then the officers obligingly posed for a mob of G.I.'s. snapping pictures with their "newly-found" German cameras. The Russians looked very sharp and impressive in their smart uniforms. When they went into the C.P., I noticed the looks on the civilians across the street. They stood there as if fixed, with a mixed expression of disbelief and apprehension on their faces.

I didn't know until later that this group included Marshall Rakossovsky and his aides who had come down from the north to visit us. This was before our contact with the Russians to our front on the Elbe. They were waiting to make the juncture until we had taken custody of all the prisoners.

When we finally met them here a few days later, there had already been several contacts made north and south of us by other Divisions so that took most of the kick out of it. And because the river was difficult to cross, each side exchanged only small groups representing similar units in each army. The bangup affair we had planned didn't materialize but it was a friendly, enthusiastic meeting nonetheless.

I met one of the first group of Russian officers to come over to our side. At first everything was very proper, and formal, exchanging salutes and all that. Then when we started chatting and they could see what ordinary guys we were it was quite different. They wrung our hands, slapped our backs and hugged us. They were genuinely happy to see us, and we couldn't help but like their robust, straightforward manner. There wasn't a bit of guile or acting in their makeup. They grinned all the time and threw a lot of body motion into the conversation. They were physically rugged and plenty lively -- nothing like the stolid, grim type we expected.

I spent most of the time talking to a tall Major who had a Charles Evans Hughes beard, pink cheeks and sharp, black eyes -- a really handsome dude, and his interpreter, a short, stocky girl who was very mannish. Their uniforms were made of medium-brown gabardine trimmed here and there with red and gold, actually nicer field

dress than our officers wear. Each had a number of silver stars on the epaulets indicating rank, a small red button with gold sickle and hammer in the center and medals of some kind on the breast.

Our conversation was mostly a complimentary sort of small talk of no consequence except that the Major volunteered that soon they would help us fight Japan. I had'nt asked him about that and there was nothing equivocal about his remark. The Japs are fascist too, he said, and the girl nodded affirmatively. I was anxious to follow up what was behind his statement but restrained myself -- it was hardly the time or place for that subject. I finally got to snap pictures of them after some persuasion and went away from that meeting with an exhilarated feeling. Not only had it been an epic and climatic moment in our little segment of the war, but I had personally felt a gush of warm friendship with power behind it -- and best of all there was that hopeful sign of forthcoming help against the Japs. (With a brother on Okinawa and a good possibility of my going that way too, it's really something to think about.)

Since that meeting there has been an exchange series of banquets and parties with the Russians that perhaps could be better described as an epicurean marathon. The Russians started it all with a terrific banquet, winding up with endless toasts and a lot of performers. Not to be outdone we invited them here, put on a good feast, had our sixty-piece band playing Russian music out on the lawn and wound it up with a U.S.O. girlie show. We even sent a truck back to Rheims, France to pick up a load of wine, champagne and cognac. That really got the game going and it's a question now of who is going to out-Jones the other, or last the longest.

With the linkup at the river there was a pathway opened up for the return of captured G.I's. Not many had been kept in the Berlin area and only a few hundred came back this way. About a week before V-E Day, I spent a whole evening talking with a group of them who just came "home" that day.

They had been placed temporarily in a school building without any facilities, but they had no complaints. They were so happy they didn't know what to do with themselves. As dog-tired as they were, not one was lying down. They kept pacing around and talking constantly about how wonderful it was going to be to take a bath, eat more of that good chow and get some clean clothes. They had been told that their shipment home would be as speedy as possible, but the meaning of that hadn't fully sunk in yet.

I was mainly interested in their treatment in the hands of the Germans to determine if there was any evidence of treaty violations, but soon found myself absorbed in their personal experiences. These are some of the highlights:

Most of the men in this group were taken in the Belgian Bulge. It was bitterly cold then and many had severe frostbite, mostly in their feet. Some of them were without socks and still in pain. No clothes had been issued and some of them had worn out and discarded their underwear. Their wool O.D's. were almost glossy black with dirt.

One sober little guy, about 20, was taken in Luxembourg in the first wave of the counterattack. He was on an observation post on a high bank overlooking the river which divided the lines at that point. It was early in the morning and they were caught completely by surprise by an attack in their rear. He was taken across the river and kept with other prisoners on the east bank waiting to be moved farther back to the German rear. While there he saw the answer to the surprise. Tiger tanks were rolling across the river on an underwater bridge.

As he thought back, he said, it became clearer. Occasionally a Kraut truck had driven down to the water's edge in broad daylight to dump something in the brush.

They had heard trucks there during the night too. At any sight or sound of vehicles they had directed artillery on the spot, but obviously the Krauts had succeeded in getting the steel bridgework down there and had fitted it together during the nights and foggy days. He could hardly believe it at first, but there it was -- a complete bridge about eight inches below the surface of the water. Apparently the Krauts had learned this one from the Russians who had used the same stunt to supply Stalingrad across the Volga. He felt chagrined and very unhappy about that bridge because it was built right under his nose, and moreso because all those tanks were surrounding his regiment.

Life in the German prison camps was tortuous. The guards didn't beat them, but it was the regimen that ground them down. They were made to get up at 0530 every morning and given a cup of bitter ersatz coffee with nothing to eat, then formed into work gangs. Most of them protested at first because it was an outright violation of the Geneva treaty, but it did no good because the rigid rule was no work no eat. They had no choice and were made to work at repairing bomb damage, mostly the railroads, and building road blocks. At noon they were given a half hour rest but no food, then worked until 1800. After marching back to camp they got their one and only meal of the day -- a cup of thin turnip or potato soup and some black bread, six men to one loaf. The weeks on end of hard labor and starvation diet of bad food made them stuporous and docile. They lost their will to attempt escape and could think of nothing all day but to get back to their straw ticks at night and lie down.

The only thing that kept their hopes and interest alive was the war news and they did everything in the books to get it. If someone would overhear the guards talking about the news he would tell the others thru a grapevine system. In one camp a G.I. radio operator rigged up a crystal set from parts he had found and kept the whole place informed on BBC broadcasts. In another camp a civilian employee who could talk English and said he was an Irishman, wrote the headline news on a small piece of paper which he folded in a wad and placed under the fence every night.

What they feared the most was the bombings. It seems that most camps are near railroad yards or industrial plants, and when they weren't being bombed they were expecting it. The bombs were so big and terrific and there were so many of them, they said, that you really don't hear or feel them. They make you deaf and you feel numb like something unreal happened. "Not that you didn't know something was knocking you cuckoo, they scared hell out of all of us," one boy said. Another told about a bomb landing on the barracks where officer prisoners were kept and that 67 of them were killed. They all agreed that they were not particularly happy to see our own planes come over; they were too preoccupied with the idea of being too close to hot targets.

In this group were others who had been prisoners much longer. One American was taken at Tobruk twenty-six months ago. He had dropped in weight from 140 to 87 lbs. and looked ten years older than his twenty-four. Two Indians in the British Army were taken in Africa three years ago. One was forty-five and the other forty-six, both rounding out fifteen years in the army. They were lucky to be assigned to farm work and had enough food. They were short, wiry men with ageless faces -- I would have guessed them to be thirty. I have never seen such nearly impeccable soldiers. They clicked their heels and stood at rigid attention every time I talked with them. Nothing I could do would put them at ease, they were simply being respectable and courteous in the only way they knew. Then there was the British Tommy. He was starved to a thin rail and carried a shriveled right arm in a sling. He was taken at Dunkirk five long years ago. About two years ago while working on a railroad gang he picked up a handful of dried peas that had spilled out of a freight car. The Nazi guard broke his arm with a rifle butt before he could put the bit of food into his pocket. He had received very little medical care and the arm is now almost useless.

They all pepped up when we started talking about their liberation by the Russians.

I asked what they thought of them and they all grinned and talked at once. The first thing they had to say was that the Russians gave them everything they wanted, but liquor first. If they didn't drink with them, they were just left by themselves. "If you drink with Ivan," one said, "he'll give you everything he's got. They liked us, you could see that. They gave us all the food we wanted and we didn't have to ask for it." Another said, "They took our whole gang over to their camp and gave us a hell of a big feed. They gave us all the champagne they had and they drank some schnapps or something. We ate like pigs and they got a bang out of watching us. They're pretty good Joes, those Russians. And another thing -- they said they were going to help us fight the Japs."

When I asked what they thought of them as fighters, those who had seen them in action assured me that they were the most fearless, if disorganized, army they could imagine. The unanimous opinion was that they had no visible organization and fought like a mob but were plenty effective.

For instance, one G.I. said, "I was in a prisoner gang in a little burg outside of Berlin and the Krauts were dug in the woods all over the place. Some Red tanks came in the town and freed us. They asked where the Krauts were and we showed them. They didn't stop to organize or anything like we do, they just wheeled and went straight at them. The riflemen ran alongside the tanks right out in the open towards those woods. The Krauts fired everything they had and knocked a lot of them down but they never stopped. God, what guts!"

Another said that where he was the Russian infantry poured all over the place like a flood. "They walked, rode bikes, horse and wagons, civilian cars and everything. Hell, there were no companies or platoons or anything like that. They came down the road looking like a bunch of refugees, or something. A machine gun out of a woods started firing at them and I saw the bullets hit the dirt in front of one Ivan on a bike, but he kept going. A few of them hit the ground but the rest around there just headed right into the woods. No maneuvering around or anything like that. They just don't seem to give a damn about getting killed. I saw some of them with bottles stuck in their shirts. It looked like they all had sub-machine guns."

Those who saw the Cossacks will probably never forget them. They saw them mopping up intowns and riding their horses behind tanks -- fierce, screaming fighters wherever they went. The cavalry was armed with sub-machine guns and sabres, but what these G.I's. remembered most vividly was the way they used their sabres. One said, "Those guys came thru the town I was in and cut up everything in sight. I saw one guy squeeze a civilian up against a building with his horse and ram him with his sabre. He even cut up a woman. Those guys really hate the Germans. I was plenty jittery and got down in a cellar fast."

I noticed that all the time these G.I's. were telling me about the Russians, with big grins on their faces, that the Tommy was looking very sober and thoughtful, so I asked him what his impression was. "They're not human, those chaps," he said, "more like beasts. I'd rawther have nothing t'do with 'm meself."

All these prisoners had to make their own way westward. The Russians were too busy fighting to even give them passes, which weren't too necessary anyway because, as they said, all you have to do is say "Amerikanski" and everything is O.K. The Russians told them to take the food they needed from the farmers and to help themselves to bicylces or horses for travelling. The G.I's. said they did just that but they were sort of apologetic when they told about it, as if they had done something wrong. It was easy to tell that they had been prisoners too long.

Two G.I's. who had been buddies all along said they had been liberated in such a hurry that they had to disarm their own guards. The guards handed over their guns quickly, and when the Russians had left they pleaded to be taken prisoners by the G.I's.

Like the others, they were told to take food from the Germans. They went to the first farmhouse and went into the kitchen. They had no arms but the woman was frightened and thought they were Russians. They told her they were Americans and her attitude changed immediately. She hedged and told them she had nothing in the house, but they were so hungry they looked around anyway and found plenty of eggs, meat and preserved vegetables. They prepared themselves a whopping big meal, but the prosperity was too much for their neglected stomachs and they promptly lost it.

We have asked hundreds of our released prisoners about food in the prison camps. It was always the same story -- the ersatz coffee, turnip soup and sour, black bread. I saw 118 of them one day and not a one had ever received a Red Cross box. Others, however, have told us that they got them every week on schedule and they had needed them badly. Apparently the receipt of these boxes depended on how close the SS troops were stationed.

In every meeting with our released prisoners they always volunteer the assurance that never again will they ever gripe about anything in our army. Most of them felt that they owed the army something for the time out and often said that when they get fattened up a little they would like to go to the CBI theatre.

We had a Chinese mission here yesterday. They were staff officers in the Chinese army acting as liaison with Shaef. All of them spoke excellent English and were an impressive and scholarly group. They were making a field tour to learn more about our field operations. We had an extra-special luncheon for them in our officers' mess while the band played out on the lawn (The Russians have gotten us into the habit now) and we had an interesting time with them. Incidentally, their ladylike deportment is quite a contrast with the Russians.

We're waiting for a big change around here soon. Everybody is busier than a beaver overhauling weapons and equipment. We have all had a profile physical examination and the personnel readjustment program is going on top speed. Everyone is carefully counting points and finding himself a little short. To sort of remove some of the mystery about all the preparation, we have just seen a must movie called "Two Down and One to Go." It's a sort of travelogue about all the pretty islands in the Pacific.

While the boys go on the new boat trip,

I remain,

H.R.H.

P.S.'s There are some interesting pictures to be had over here but we can't get film. I'll make all of you a proposition. If you send me some film, size 120, I'll send back prints of the pictures I take.

Lt. Ed Cleary - I received the announcement. Congratulations. It isn't every guy that can marry a carnival queen. Since you deserted too, I guess that just leaves Mr. Anthony Peterson and me.

Dutch Strout - Received your three-pager. Lots of the stuff I like to hear about. many thanks.

Andy Bratter - Sorry to hear that people are doubting the news of the atrocities. We discovered so many all at once that it probably was just beyond their comprehension. We have found four places where hundreds were burned alive in a building of some sort. Why they picked that means of slaughter we can't understand ourselves. So far in our area alone we have found the bodies of over four thousand prisoners and slave laborers who were burned or shot.

Roy Bergengren - I have your letter of May 9th. There's so much in it that I'm saving it to answer at length at the first opportunity.

Lt. Keith Evans - Thanks for the letter. After it's all the way over, a trip to Cal. is on my must list and I'll sure drop in at Carmel.

James C. Cahill - Thanks for putting me on the list, and for the letter too.

Dorothy Jacobson - I showed the clipping to several men here, including liaison pilots who have flown over the industrial cities. We can't imagine where the dope comes from that our bombings "missed" American and British owned plants over here. It just isn't true. I saw only one article like that, by Max Lerner, who said a food factory in the Ruhr was only slightly damaged. Precision bombing is nowhere near as precise as the magazine articles say. Some targets have been obviously missed by as much as three miles. It's impossible to bomb all around one factory with any assurance that it won't be hit. Charge that one up to more loose reporting.

George Feller - Received postcards from Des Moines and Madison, also the medical bill from John. Many thanks.

Fred Eiden - If these little acknowledgements don't discourage you, I hope you keep writing those interesting letters. There's no let up in the heap of work I have right now and no chance to do all the writing I'd like.

Naomi and Burnie - That was an especially good batch of clippings. Again thanks. Also got Burnie's Hiva Watha poem. I guess I haven't mentioned it but the President's death stopped us in our tracks over here. We are accustomed to death and all kinds of shocks but we felt this blow like a sort of defeat. We had a comfortable assurance that everything about the peace would come out well in his hands. Now there is a feeling of uncertainty. But it was more than that. The loss was deep and close because all of us were so proud of him. The people in England and all the liberated countries spoke of him with reverence. They must have been stunned too.

John McConneloug - Received your April low-down sheet, and the medical bill. Donke schen.

Helen Olson - I don't believe that business about the gal trying to join the WAGs, but it sounded good anyway.

Mother and Irma - We had ceremony yesterday with General Keating pinning Bronze Star medals on several of us (mine was about war crimes) and all the monkey business with formal presentations took a long time. In the midst of all the solemnity there were a lot of explosions around the other side of the building. No one could imagine what it was, so the aide ran around there, came back, whispered in the General's ear and the thing went on for about twenty more minutes, with explosions the whole time. Afterward we found out that the Poles working here for us were burning trash out of the basement and they hadn't bothered to remove the loose bullets and flare shells. "You told us to burn everything," they said.
