

A letter from

LT. HORACE RUSSELL HANSEN

01325088

Hdgtrs. Det. - 86th Repl. Bn., APO #153 c/o Postmaster, N.Y., N.Y.

France, Aug. 27, 1944

Dear Folks and Friends,

My new APO address means that I have been assigned here temporarily on special duty as Judge Advocate Officer. Better still, it means that letters from you good people will reach me much quicker.

This is the outfit I've been with all along, and the job is the same - to stay close to the front and furnish replacements. Our position is always interesting, if often hot.

For what seems a long time now we've been on a mad dash trying to keep up. Aircraft and armor have splattered the Krauts around so much that there is hardly such a thing as a "front" any more. Since the battle took this turn we've seen some interesting changes.

At first, on the peninsula, the going thru the hedgerows was slow, with heavy, constant exchange of fire. Then there was the long stalemate at St. Lo. The Frenchmen were sure that we hadn't taken too big a bite. They were friendly but not enthusiastic. We could tell by their conduct that they were skeptical of our winning, altho they said nothing. Still we admired the way they stayed on their places and stuck it out.

During the stalemate the farmers were herded back by the enemy. With the break-thru we came upon empty, looted houses, un milked, bellowing cattle, uneaten food on kitchen tables, partially butchered calves and sheep in abandoned campsites, and other evidences of hasty departure. Not a Frenchman was in sight.

Miles further south we began to see the refugees drifting back. They had been thru hell - lack of food and shelter, our shell-fire, the escape from forced labor, the dangerous return against our fire, the searching interrogation at our lines. When finally they set their wooden shoes and sore feet on free territory they knew what liberation meant. Despite their suffering and their expectation of finding their homes in ruins, none of them failed to grin and wave at every truckload of us that passed them. Now they were sure of our winning.

When we turned east toward Paris their spirits were riding high on the victory wave. Enthusiasm was unbounded. Work was practically abandoned. Frenchmen lined the roads yelling themselves hoarse. Women threw kisses. Homemade tricolors hung everywhere.

In the towns, where homes and stores are tight against the sidewalks, people protruded from every door and window, an animated, vertical mass of smiling faces and waving arms. The crescendo of cheers as we came in could be heard above the reverberating roar of our trucks between the close walls. When jams slowed or stopped us, people ran up to us with bottles of wine and cognac, threw flowers, shook our hands, kissed us on both cheeks. Riding in the open cab, I was easier to reach than the men in the back and did very well for myself.

Later, closer to Paris, DeGaulle was following us making speeches, and the premature announcement of the capital's liberation was broadcast. To a Frenchman, Paris means France, and the floodgates of emotion went wide open.

We were making a particularly long move that took a whole day, one I shall never forget. All of us had become accustomed to the adulation of thousands of grateful people, but on this day the spirit of the occasion was catching. Celebrated gains now merged into an air of complete victory. These Frenchmen, who are not noted for their calm, simply sprang the bounds of propriety completely, losing themselves in a tide of hysterical joy.

It is all such a crazy blur to me now that I can't remember all of the incidents that were so vivid at the time. I will never forget an old lady in a second-story window in a large town. A convoy of trucks loaded with German prisoners were passing us, going in the opposite direction, as we halted for a moment. This old lady thumbed her nose vigorously at each truckload as it passed under her window. In another town we met an F.F.I. armored outfit. American equipped even to uniforms. Their only distinction was the bright red color of their caps. They were off their

vehicles having a wild time, drinking cognac and kissing the women. One well-oiled motorcycle rider wobbled uncertainly in a courtyard, finally fell slowly sideways and passed out cold on the cobblestones.

Welcome signs were plastered everywhere. One said "Welcome at our liberty." A few people talked a little broken English. One girl came up to me and said, "When you come back from Bairleen me go Amair-r-eeeka weez you." I replied something like "O.K. Tootsie" and she thought I meant "tout suite" (right away) so she started to give me her name and address. One lady poked her arm in the cab and handed me two eggs. Others gave me apples, tomatoes, peaches and pears along the way, - but my arm was longest for the bottled donations. Americans are never out-done in generosity and our trucks spewed cigarettes, rations and candy all the way.

That night our morale was the best since the beach, but as we dug in, the rumble of artillery and the certainty of Jerry planes on night patrol made the day seem unreal. But one thing was real, - We were one big step closer to home, and we "hit the sack" feeling two kinds of good spirits.

Other things changed too. Instead of having a compact line between us and the enemy there were armored spearheads out in front and Krauts were all around us. Instead of hedgerows there were open fields and occasional patches of woods that we used for bivouacs, and that scattered bands of Krauts also used for hiding places. We've been finding them in or near every place we've camped. They were lost from their outfits, if they had any outfits left, and were concerned entirely with preserving their own lives.

Occasionally some of these Germans snipe at us and set booby traps in our paths, but most of them are just flushed out of their hiding, or come up to us and surrender. The moment we hit a bivouac area we patrol the woods in all directions and never fail to get some prisoners. They carry shelter canvasses, camouflaged to look like grass, and don't get up and raise their hands until you practically step on them. (Burnie, it reminds me of our hunting trip when our friend stepped on the pheasant.) They always have some ammunition, but little, if any food. Some who can't bear the hunger any longer just quietly and soberly appear in our midst for surrender, as many as forty in a bunch, usually the morning after we occupy an area.

At one place a mess sergeant was engaged in his morning ritual just off the edge of camp, prior to preparing breakfast. While he was thus occupied, two Krauts came up to him to surrender. He didn't know whether to go ahead with what he had started - or what! Scared and flustered, he looked so foolish that the Krauts just stood in front of him and laughed. They were unarmed and were apparently only trying to be congenial. Anyway, the sergeant was too scared to get mad about it until afterward, when for a long time his kitchen help wouldn't let him forget the incident.

Two of us went to a nearby town one day to buy some wine. Nick went into the cafe and came back with two bottles. We were just starting the Jeep when two German officers and a corporal came out of nowhere. The corporal spoke in fair English. "We surrender to American soldiers." We turned them over to the F.F.I. to take to the P.W. camp. Incidentally, we've noticed that the officers always seem to take off on their own for some reason. We never find an officer with a bunch of privates.

The F.F.I. is rough on these groups of Krauts. They have been a big help to us, relieving us of prisoners, sweeping the woods, cleaning out by-passed towns, giving us information about the enemy, and guarding roads and bridges. They are dressed in civilian clothes and are armed with anything they can capture, steal, or get from us. Their only identification is a tricolor band with the Cross of Lorraine worn on the left arm.

They have no personal identification yet, as they operate under the same organization they used in the underground movement. There are ten men in a "cell", having one leader who is the only one who knows the next higher leader, and so on. Orders come down, and information about the enemy goes back, thru this obscure chain of command. This arrangement is made purposely, so that no informer could betray more than ten men.

All during the occupation the Underground carried on raids and sabotage, operating mostly from woods near the Swiss border and from the Pyrennes. Most of them told us they joined to escape the labor draft for Germany. This was not easy, because each person in France had a complete identification card without which he could get no food. There was also the danger of exposure by paid collaborators. So they had to disappear

from society altogether and go into hiding. Some of them told us frankly that they were in because all good Communists joined. They are called "Maquis" from a similar word referring to Corsican bandits.

They told us many instances of Nazi brutality during the occupation, old stories that all of you have read so often. One occurred recently. An S.S. detachment was fleeing a town after hearing of our approaching armor. As a last parting gesture a trooper on the back of a truck sprayed the street with a submachine gun, killing some women and small children. A priest who spoke good English told me the same story.

The Krauts knew that the F.F.I. was intimately familiar with their past behavior, and were scared still of them. They knew, too, that they were being hunted down like rats, day and night, another reason they always chose to surrender to us. The F.F.I. has a poor record for bringing in prisoners, or, for that matter, for delivering those that we turn over to them. Their story is always the same - "One of them tried to escape." Incidentally, when Nick and I turned over our three prisoners to them we got a terrific argument.

Despite the swiftness of the advance, the Krauts had time for some preparation. Every now and then on main blacktop roads they laid mines in the shoulders, just on the edge of the hard surface where they weren't noticeable. The roads are narrow, not quite wide enough for passing without going off on to the shoulder slightly. Our combat engineers did a good job of clearing them, but it caused delay.

The Germans also had time, for miles at a stretch, to dig foxholes every 100 feet or so on both sides of the main roads which they used in their retreat. Each foxhole was marked by a stick with a tuft of straw on top so that personnel in the retreating vehicles could get into them in a hurry when our aircraft strafed them. They also scattered "mustard pot" mines in the grass where they thought we would pass. These mines are about the size of our hand grenades, and go off at the slightest jar. Some of our men unfortunately stumbled into them. But the Germans didn't have time to lay large mine fields as they are doing in Italy.

I doubt if the Germans took a worse shellacing anywhere in this war than they did along this stretch of ground. All the main highways were strewn thick with their smashed and burned trucks and tanks. Those hit with rocket bombs were hardly recognizable. Our Air Corps certainly had some field days here. When we went thru there hadn't been time yet to pick up all the dead that were lying in the ditches. The roads had just been hastily cleared to get our trucks thru.

The countryside now looks much like Minnesota, except for the absence of lakes. Farms are larger, everything looks more prosperous, than in the area we encountered earlier. People are dressed better, towns are larger and cleaner. Houses and buildings are more trim and attractive. It isn't too different from our country in appearance, but little things constantly keep reminding us that this is still the Old World. Such things as wooden shoes, huge two-wheeled wagons drawn by horses hooked up in tandem or by oxen, a funeral procession led by embroidered clergy on foot followed by a shiny black horsedrawn hearse driven by a man in tails and tall silk hat, artistic churches centuries old, farmers threshing grain with a flail stick, women washing clothes by beating them with a paddle, straw-thatched houses here and there, and so on.

The battle slowed down at the Seine, and I had the good fortune to visit Paris. Three of us went there with the chaplain in his light truck. Besides furnishing the transportation, his presence bolstered us against such evil thoughts as, for instance, desertion.

We came around a curve on a high hill, and suddenly saw the Eiffel Tower and a panoramic view of the city, - like that from the lookout point over Duluth. We stopped to take a snapshot with the Tower at our backs when an excited Frenchman ran up to us. "I honor you, God Bless you! Got any cigarettes?" We made a quick deal. For cigarettes (worth \$3.00 a pack) he became our willing guide and interpreter.

We got a reception in the city that beat anything we had previously experienced. Blaze as we were from weeks of wild receptions, this peak performance really impressed us. We were literally mobbed. Wherever we stopped people climbed all over us. Some seemed to get a thrill from just touching us. I have never before, and never again will be, kissed by so many women at one place. There was no stopping them, if we wanted to. We soon learned to keep moving in order not to block traffic as we did at one place. Our arms were soon tired from trying to make some gesture of friendly acknowledgement for all the greetings along the streets.

We came at an auspicious time. DeGaulle had been there just three days earlier and the city was still flushed with excitement and festive spirit. The profusion of color was dazzling - tricolors and bunting on the buildings; many shades of dresses, hats, shoes, and bicycles; bright awnings over sidewalk cafes just opening for the first time in four years. People were coming out of their shells now without hesitation. The fighting was over except for a little rifle fire at night. Many people, we were told, were promenading in their Sunday best just to test the feel of it all, to be part of the gay crowds. It was something like an Easter parade and an armistice celebration rolled into one.

It was an auspicious time for a visit for another reason. The city was off limits to all troops, except for AA and a few other small units. We rationalized another exception for a chaplain's party, - ostensibly he was looking for the Episcopal Church, which he never found, - and we enjoyed, or suffered, more prominence than was deserving a group of sightseers. Our M.P.'s were not there in force yet, and the city was run by the F.F.I., who couldn't do enough for us.

We parked the truck near L'Arc de Triomphe, then went to see the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Its flame has been kept burning all during the occupation. It was impressive. Men passing by removed their hats, we removed our helmets. A gentleman, Maurice Cochet, obligingly took snapshots of us there, got our addresses, and will mail the prints to our homes when it is possible. I gave him a cigar, a rare, ante-bellum luxury for him. He kept looking fondly at it all during our conversation. Speaking good English, he told us that he had been an engineer for Westinghouse before the war. He seemed well-dressed, but apologized for his appearance, explaining that no suits had been obtainable and that his wife had reversed the one he was wearing. His two sons are in forced labor in Germany. He saved his automobile from seizure by hiding the wheels, telling the "pigs" that they had been stolen.

We walked down the main drag - L'Avenue des Champs Elysees. The wide street was filled with bicycles, 6 to 8 abreast, going in both directions. The riders were mostly women, - beautiful women, - actually looking graceful. You almost have to imagine Chili Williams, fresh out of Lord and Taylor's, riding a chrome, light blue, or lavender bicycle to visualize what we saw. The whole picture was a floating, billowy mass of color and tinkling bells. It was a major task to cross the street.

The sidewalk is as wide as the street, having alternately two auto-park strips and two pedestrian walks. Wide as it was, with the absence of cars, it was jammed. At the sidewalk cafes it was almost impassible. We found a vacant table at one and had a glass of wine.

I like this French custom. There's something delightfully different about sitting outdoors, drinking wine on a sunny day in the midst of brightly colored tables, chairs, and awnings, just relaxing and watching the people go by. And these Parisians are very easy to look at. I noticed the women mostly, not just because I'm single and still looking, but because, frankly, they are more beautiful lot for lot than any I've ever seen.

All of us readily agreed on this stunning preponderance of pulchritude and tried to analyze it, with conclusions like these: - they use the right kind of complimentary color and cut in their dresses, flattering shape in their hats, never overdo their makeup, and have very artistic coiffeures. But it isn't all eyewash: they are subtly, completely feminine, have a gay, vivacious air about them. We noticed that they have a fetching way of being absorbed in their male escorts - (a rarity because so many of the men are in forced labor in Germany or in the F.F.I.) The smart, stylish parade was complete with a sprinkling of colorful parasols, and fancy, barbered pooches on leashes.

The shops were show places, the good French taste for color and design being very evident. There seemed to be a fair amount of women's clothing, almost nothing for men. Shoes were made mostly from cloth, with jointed wood or rope soles. Everything was very expensive. There were plenty of beauty and perfume shops everywhere in the city.

Captain Paris wanted to get a black negligee for his wife. After trying three places we found one on a side street that looked like a millionaire's parlor, - circular marble stairways, statuary, paintings, exquisite rugs, drapes, and furniture. Nothing was displayed. A gracious lady with a cultured English voice greeted and seated us, and got the Captain's confusing order. We waited uneasily, fumbling with our rifles and helmets.

In a few minutes came the parade, - five gorgeous creatures dripping with silk and lace.

Poor Paris! He had to be shown in detail, inside and out, at close range, - and these models were lightly clad, to say the most. He picked a black one trimmed with white lace, or maybe what he picked was the dream therein with the flowing blond hair. Anyhow it cost him 12,000 francs (\$240), which prompted an inquiry from the chaplain as to whether the price also included the blond, - which in turn reminded me of an old saw you can all remember without much effort.

Finery like this was beyond the reach of the Germans during the occupation, and was just beginning to appear from hiding places. This was true of other things too, such as good wine, cognac, bicycles, silk stockings, and some leather shoes.

This was a one-day trip, consumed mostly in shopping for things typically French and unobtainable in the States. We had little success. The few things that tempted us weren't worth the terrific price. If we had had American dollars we would have received four times the value of the Army's rate of exchange of 100 francs for \$2.00.

The next visit was a long one, - 3 days and 2 nights, and this time I had a good look around. Outside of L'Arc de Triomphe, I was most impressed with Notre Dame Cathedral, L'Opera, the Louvre, Les Invalides (where Napoleon is buried), and the Grand Palais, in that order. There are many beautiful circles, like the Place de la Concorde which has Napoleon's Egyptian obelisk in the center. Some hotels, like de Ville and des Invalides are as pretentious and luxurious as castles. There are extremely modern buildings too, like the Prince of Wales Hotel and Palais de Challet, which has an underground theatre. No building is much, if any, over eight stories high, and, to this American eye, it makes for a pleasing symmetry. Graceful statuary, lots of neatly cropped trees and shrubbery, and artistic bridges over the winding Seine put the finishing touches on the most beautiful city I have ever seen.

I like the French people better the more I see of them. I like their zest, easy laughter, open emotions, and childlike curiosity. They were extremely nice to us, but they act like that among themselves as well. Here are some typical experiences on the street.

We stopped to look at our map. In an instant two Frenchmen were looking over our shoulders wanting to help. In another instant several were gathered around, wanting to see. That was the nucleus for a mob. Suddenly 4 became 8, 16, 32, then a real mob with everybody jabbering at once. Even people riding bikes on the street, hearing something, would toss in some advice, probably totally irrelevant. One sedate gentleman with pince nez glasses, tiny black mustache, and black Homburg hat, did this so intently that he ran into the curb and fell off his bike.

We were looking at the statues around the outside of L'Opera when three girls came up and gave us their calling cards to autograph. This started a crowd that was soon out into the street. Others wanted our names too, just to be doing the popular thing of the moment, I guess. Some insisted on our addresses, and we will probably be getting mail at our homes some day from people we won't remember even slightly. Our patient indulgence of the osculation that went with each autograph for the girls didn't hold the crowd down any and apparently provided some entertainment. Our faces were literally red. That crowd was a beener.

One lone G.I., feeling his cognac just enough to make him loud and loquacious, was having a good time apparently trying to see how big a mob he could gather. In the style of a side-show barker he was yelling, "Next show starts at 3 o'clock, folks. Don't miss it. Step right up and get yer tickets now. We'll have Jo-Jo, the dog-faced boy - - -", etc. The Frenchmen stood quietly and watched him with sober, quizzical faces. They didn't understand a word he was saying, but his crowd was getting bigger by the minute.

At one end of a bridge two G.I.'s were sitting at a big AA gun, completely encircled by a pile of sandbags and a lot of Frenchmen. Their eyes were glued on the one using the telephone. To a civilian he probably looked pretty important and heroic with that big gun and the telephone. For no good reason I stopped to listen to what he was saying, and caught part of the bull session he was having with a buddy, probably about another gun -- "I gotta mob of Frogs around here gawking at me," and "Gees, dont those babes on the bikes drive ya nuts?" The incongruity of all those serious faces was pretty funny.

We made some interesting acquaintances on the streets by chance, mostly well-educated people who spoke good English. Usually they would simply come up to us, present themselves, and offer to help somehow.

One, a doctor with an attractive blond wife, had a car and drove us around. He said, "I admire you Americans. All you need to do is motion to a girl and she will come to you, even my wife here." In sooth, a compliment, - and a fact.

I have a good collection in my address book for the return visit I'd like to make some day. The most interesting is a brother lawyer, Louis Berthelot, who is president of Compagne Nationale des Petroles. I got to know him and his Australian wife very well, and would like to see them again. They assure me that they will see me in America before I get back to Paris after the war. Like many others, he is tired of the constant political turmoil and wants to pursue a normal life in America. He has lost a fortune in withholding production from the Germans, was jailed for being pro-English because he had been a commercial attache in London and Lisbon. Knowing he was wealthy, there were many cheap blackmail attempts made by threatening his return to jail. He countered these attempts by threatening the Nazis who made them that they would be killed by his Maquis friends if he were harmed. He had no such friends, but the Nazis ceased bothering him. His chemists have done interesting things with peat that he would like to try out in America.

I have a good turn to my credit in Paris. In the last letter I mentioned meeting Vicomtesse de Puthod back on the peninsula, - how she and her children were caught in the midst of the battle, the chateau being bombed, her anxiety for her husband in Paris, his obvious concern for them, and their inability to communicate with each other. I had a written message for him and his address.

I tried to find the place on foot. It was on one of those short streets connecting the avenues stemming from the Arch and apparently I was going in circles. I hooked a ride with a corporal in a Jeep and we finally found it.

When I told him his family was safe and well he was overjoyed. It was his first word from them since the invasion. While I was telling him he held my hand in both of his and shook his head from side to side. When, after many questions, he was satisfied he had all the news, he had me write a short account of it in his guest book. He is a mellow old man, about 65, and a pleasant host. We became quite friendly, and he let me in on his big secret.

He had been in the underground movement since the first days of the occupation. One of the things he did was to print slogans on small slips of paper which were surreptitiously distributed and posted all over Paris. He printed these with blocks of wood to which were glued characters he had cut from inertube rubber. He had over 50 of these print blocks and gave me two of them, dated in September, 1941. One says "Collaboration-Trahison, Mort aux Traîtres". The other shows a spiked club marked "U.S.A." smashing the swastika and the words "L'Allemagne Sera Ecrasée" (Germany shall be crushed).

I told him I thought he had put his neck out pretty far, but he said it was such a little thing. He explained that when France fell he and his wife had agreed that she and the children would care for the chateau near St. Lo where food was plentiful, while he watched over the properties in Paris, and that each would do all they could in the underground.

At this point the Jeep driver, who had come in with me expecting a drink, which he got, excused himself, stating that his boss, Columnist Knickerbocker, would be waiting. He left saying, "I sure gotta tell him about this one."

The Vicomte's sister told me that their worst suffering had been from lack of fuel in winter, how dish towels froze stiff in the kitchen, how old Louise, a domestic in the family for 74 years, had stayed in bed all winter to keep warm. The sister longed to return to America, where she had taught French history at Wellesley College for a short time. It was a pleasant visit and hard to leave.

The food situation in Paris is bad because transportation is lacking. Railroads and bridges are knocked out, only a few trucks are operating on wood burners, there is no gasoline and no electricity. The few open night clubs used candles. We had difficulty finding a place to eat until we found that we were welcome at hotels requisitioned by the F.F.I., and we ate in these scrumptious places in pre-war style.

Damage to the main part of Paris is slight. The worst is the Grand Palais, which the Germans soaked in gasoline and burned in childish reprisal for some F.F.I. sniping. The statuary on the entry arches to Notre Dame Cathedral are badly nicked from rifle fire when DeGaulle was there. Smashed German tanks and vehicles are here and there,

looking as strangely out of place as Dick Ryan's jallopy in an art mussum, The industrial section on the north side is in complete ruins.

I tried to find out from all I could what they thought the future government of France would be like. They all thought there was a strong possibility that there would be a communist uprising and that there were no other groups strong enough to contend with it. They said that even before the war there was a seething movement that was getting out of hand. They point out that the F.F.I. is largely communist, or at least its leaders are. My lawyer friend said that 90% of the F.F.I. in Paris was communist, the Vicomte said 40%. They said that DeGaulle is too indecisive, had changed his ministers in Paris several times already. One said that four of his present ministers were communist, those for Transport, National Economy, Agriculture and Liberated Territory.

These people with whom I talked, by chance, because they spoke English all live in the 16th District, the silk-stocking section of Paris. They may be taking an alarmist viewpoint. In any event, they blame the average Frenchman's indifference to government for their former weakness, and say that now the opposite will be true. There is now a strong feeling on the part of women, who have done so much of the work the last four years, for the right to vote. Everyone hopes that Roosevelt will be re-elected as a assurance that there will be stable government thruout the world as well in France, and that Germany will be made militarily impotent for all time. They pin many hopes on Roosevelt; too many, I think.

Back in the hole that night after my visit I couldn't get to sleep. I still smelled perfume, or thought I did, and couldn't stop thinking about dancing in beautiful night clubs and drinking champagne, about clean sheets and soft beds, hot baths, and five-course dinners with wine.

Paris is one of those things that makes the Infantry tolerable.

Best regards,

H.R.H.

P.S.'s: - This may not be mailed for some time. Things are stretched out so far that we haven't been able to connect with the A.P.O.

Jim Lynch - Heard about your trip to Cal. with Monty, another with Egan. What is it Sunset 22822?

Bud and Florence - Thanks for the C.H. gossip and please send more.

Bill Desmond - For fear of being stricken from the list I hereby acknowledge receipt of Communiques thru No. 12.

John Burke - Some noon at the Wagon, show Desmond some copies of your Burps and how to properly raise hell with one's friends in a gentile manner.

Helen Olson - Gen Lear says we may be going to where Ralph is via Suez when this is over. That's no good.

Earl Rentfro - Sorry to hear you were ill. Guys like you and Feller try to do too much. Would like to get some printed stuff on what's doing.

Benny Belfer - Thanks for the enclosures. A lot of boys here have enjoyed reading them.

Dave and Nonie - There's never anything but good news from your place it seems.

Burnie - The cafes were pretty gay. No one seemed to be self-conscious about necking, day or night. You tell me if they've changed.

Fred Eiden - How about being my permanent political news-clipping agent?

Don Schwartz - You can still be a dignified professor and drink beer, viz., Dr. Gaumnitz.

Brother Dick - I'm keeping it down, don't worry. And I do plenty of digging.

Friends in G.H.M. - Your progress is amazing. I'm as happy about it as you are.

Lt. St. Clair - Cap't Gag went to the 30th. Lt. Cohen is C.O. and Lt. Fitch is M.P.Ldr. in Co. H, 115th Inf., APO #29. Lt. Swenson is head of a detail clearing mines from our new bivouac areas. We've been on "C" rations a long time now. Big problem is keeping clothes and bedding dry. We use deep prone trench with a heavy cover here, found it the only thing much good against strafing. We've been catching it once in a while during the day, but mostly at dusk, which is a good time to hit the sack. Has Capt. Saxon shipped yet?

Folks - Feeling fine despite the canned rations. Once in a while we manage to get eggs, tomatoes, etc. from farmers or from well-wishers along the way. Bought a warm field coat with a hood from the mobile P.X. I look like a walking muskrat house in the thing, but it feels good early in the morning when it's foggy and cold. I won't need the one at home.

Note: By V-mail from Holland, written September 20, H.R.H. writes that he was then finishing another letter, which is now probably on its way.