

Friday 27, April, 1945

Dear Mom,

A lot of the restrictions on what we could write and what we couldn't have now been lifted and it should make writing a lot easier. Its not that they ever interfered too seriously but it always seemed as if just those things you wanted to say were verboten. And of course, we still aren't allowed to say where we are. I got a big laugh out of the last letter I got from Julia- the one with that beautiful picture of Steve in it. You see, the only thing the censor was interested in was that if our mail was intercepted no one would know where our outfit was at. So while I couldn't say that I, personally, was at a certain place, or in a certain army, I could mention some name that you would recognize as me and say that that person was in that place or in that army. Well, the first time I decided to use that scheme I was stuck for some name that would identify me and I decided that if I said Snappy was in the 7th army you would recognize it as our ^{old} dog's name and link it up with me. Later on I made other similar references. You must have thought I was crazy. At any rate now we're in the 3rd Army- after being in nearly every other one- and trying to catch up with Mac's outfit. He's still quite a distance from us despite the fact that we're in an advanced position!

But the big thing about the raising of the restriction, Mom, is that I can tell you we were at Buchenwald Concentration Camp! I tried to indicate it in my last letter but I'm sure you couldn't understand it. We worked there for awhile and in a very limited way but the medical outfit you read about in connection with the camp was ours. We had all sorts of congressman and members of parliament visiting and eating at our place. There's was so much more that could have been done- but what we did do helped enormously. We lived at a swanky military school nearby and worked at the camp.

How I can I begin to tell you of the terrible things that we saw and heard about? So many of the ^{PRISONERS} were Jews from Poland, ~~and~~ especially the children, ~~and~~ they were so happy to discover that I could talk to them that they swarmed around to tell me everything that they had suffered. That first day we came there and walked around looking at all the horrors before they had been cleaned up, visiting the people in their dirty, crowded barracks- the way they begged me to write some relatives they had in America, to give them a piece of sugar. Most of them were innocent victims, but Mom, ~~but~~ there were many of them who had brought it upon themselves. There was a large group of Hungarian Jews who had voluntarily come into Germany with money and jewels, thinking to escape with their precious property from the Red Army. All of the Jews had come from Auswitz Concentration Camp, from ~~where~~ the Nazis had moved them to Buchenwald as the Red Army came closer. All the stories that you read in the papers were true, Mom. The way those men looked as we brought them out of the Concentration Camp to the hospital which we had set up in the S.S. barracks. So thin that they could hardly walk and you could see bones which you never dreamed existed. They had become so unused to food that what we gave them nauseated them and they threw up. Even when they were able to retain it it was so rich that they got diarrhea. When you add this to the fact that they were too weakened to control themselves you can imagine that they weren't a clean or pretty sight. Outside of having a frightened look the smaller children didn't look too bad and the men had evidently made sure that the kids ate. But there were plenty of boys of 18 who looked like about 10 or 12.

Mom, some of those kids were in concentration camps for 4 years and more. There was one kid who attached himself to me one day and I had a terrific desire to send him home, Mom, if there had been any way you'd have had another son. He was 8 years old, 4 of them spent in camps- a good-looking kid. His father had been with him until the day before the American troops came in. Then they had marched him out with 20,000 others of whom 11,00 were killed. No one knows whether he was one of them or not. The kid would have been taken out too, like they did, 300 other, but he had hid. Some of the photographers took pictures of him and you may have seen them in the Jewish papers. He's young enough to forget most of the awful things he's lived through. Golly, I hope they make some decent arrangements for all those kids. We were planning to show them their first movies when we were moved out. We did manage to bring them some toys and games which we had found in some Nazi warehouses and they were overjoyed. They were such simple games that I wouldn't have dreamed of bringing stuff like that to Steve.

We were living about a mile away from the camp, in luxurious quarters. There was a modern laundry in the building and immediately a couple of the boys set up shop and washed all our clothes for us. The only difficulty was that we had moved so fast that our mail didn't arrive until the day we left there and for a couple of weeks there had been no news from home. There were showers and a dining room in which to eat. And we were even planning to use the dishes there instead of our mess kits. What a luxury that would have been!

Got a letter from Jack and will answer it immediately now that I'm certain of his address. Both he and Julia told me about Pearl's wedding. I wish I knew their address so that I could write to her. It almost doesn't seem possible that she's old enough to be married. I'm sure that when I get back she'll act as if she had taken care of me instead of vice versa. I guess you know by now that Lefty's back in New York. It shouldn't surprise me at all if she hasn't visited you. Her brother-in-law was wounded over here and they're waiting anxiously for him to come home.

I feel fine, Mom and am working no harder than I have been up to now. I should imagine that we're one of the strangest units in the entire army. We're eating wonderfully and have been having fried real eggs nearly every morning. Occasionally our rations don't get here on time but even then we manage more than adequately. I'm enclosing a sample menu from one of our Ten-in-one emergency units. These provide 3 meals for 10 people and come packed in a box not much larger than a hat box. There are 5 different menus and in addition to what they list it also includes toilet paper and napkins. Honestly!

Jean is still in Texas and complaining because she was transferred out of an Evac Hosp. and is stuck down there. Things between us are no different than they were before I left home. I think I told you, Mom, that I didn't intend to let myself think seriously of her, or anyone else, until after the war was over.

Still haven't received any copies of FM. I suppose when they do come there'll be a dozen, at least.

So logg, Mom,
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How about that picture of you and Pop that I asked for?