

Somewhere in Germany  
~~"VE Day"~~ 8 May 1945  
Tuesday

Dearest Shirley,

Good morning, my dearest. I hope and pray that both you and Laura are well and ok and that everything is all right at home. I am fine. I got some mail again this morning so feel a little better so far as moral~~e~~ goes too.

I received a letter from you written April 8th and one the 10th, one V-Mail from Mother, and an Air Mail from Mr. Rhudy.

In your letter of the 8th you complained about my not giving you enough news about my daily life, the fellows I work with, and the things I have seen. I know that I have written a few letters lately telling you more about things I have seen than I usually do but no doubt you would be interested in many of the things that I do not mention.

Since we entered Germany and have been on the move again we have been busier than usual but have not had to take calisthenics in the mornings. A normal day for me now begins about 7:15 or 7:30 am. I get up, wash, shave and go to chow. We eat chow in what apparently was a mess hall for the Germans only a short time before we arrived here. At least the building seems to have been a kitchen and mess hall. We eat from 7:30 to 8:15 and then to the office. At present, as you know, I am Acting Administration Supervisor and my work consists mostly of controlling the work that goes through the Administration Section and following things thru to completion. I write about 90% of the letters and supervise the typing, filing, and mailing sections. I also check all letters before they are to be signed by one of the Officers. I still take some dictation but not so much as when the Administration Supervisor was here and I had more time to spare.

We work from 8:15 to noon and from 1:00 pm to 5:15 or 5:30 pm. Evening chow is from 5:30 to 6:30. After chow, if work is running along normally and we are not on the move, we have the evenings to ourselves. It is amazing how a bunch of GI's can sit around in a Bull session and kill an evening when everyone of them had good intentions to write a half dozen letters. Also, since we have been in Germany we find a lot of interesting things around the barracks or camps where we are stationed to occupy our time. Some things we find can be kept as souvenirs, but most of the things we see cannot be removed from their present habitat as anything belonging to civilian population, anything of military value, or private property must be unmolested or one would find himself arrested for looting or pilfering.

In addition to being stenographer and clerk in the office, when we move I am assistant driver on one of the large semi-trailer and tractor jobs. I drive the tractor that pulls the Administration

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Van in which I work. I believe it best not to tell you how many vans we have in the unit or how many tractors, etc, but can tell you that we have a tractor for each van now. When we first came to France we had only half enough tractors for the vans and had to make two trips to move the whole unit or else borrow tractors from another unit. Early in the days after we came to France, though, we got enough tractors for each van and that was when I became assistant driver on one of the tractors. Prior to the time when we got the extra tractors I was driver of a Weapons Carrier, which is a 3/4 ton truck which we use to haul personnel and their equipment. I also used to drive the Command Car on trips for the Captain back in England and France, but since my work has become more important and I have more responsibility in the office I do not go out on trips very often. The trip to Paris was both a business trip and pleasure trip, and the Captain picked four men for that trip that he thought would be interested in going to the main machine records unit in Europe and finding out a few things about the work there as well as picking men that he felt deserved a break like getting to see Paris.

I told you about the four of us and the Captain going to Paris and back with two trucks and taking in some reports from our unit and bringing back supplies. I also told you a good deal about what I did in Paris during the spare hours I had there. Paris was really pretty, just like the song - -"Paris in the Spring ..."  
I wish that you might have seen it, too. The subway system in Paris is wonderful. It is far better than the ones in London or New York. I did not do too much walking in Paris but went wherever I had to go or wanted to go by Metro. I did see a good bit of the city from the truck, though, as we drove through the city from one corner almost to the other corner opposite and drove in still another direction to park the trucks.

You asked about the peoples in the countries where I have been. I don't have much use for the English or England. Parts of England are very beautiful, as I told you in letters after various trips I made in England, but England is too cold and wet to suit me. The people that one encounters in theaters, shops, etc. didn't interest me much. A few of the old gentlemen were interesting to talk to. The girls are not pretty at all, as a rule. A beautiful girl is rare. The fellows that went out with English girls didn't bring back too good stories about most of them.

When we entered Normandy we encountered the best country that I had seen in a long time. The farming country, the hills, and the valleys were very pretty. The people were wholesome, real, and friendly. They really appreciated all that the Americans had done to liberate them. They brought us cider, did our laundry, or anything that they could to help us. They did not want money but appreciated any little bit of chocolate, ration crackers, and such. At that time we got more of the dehydrated chocolate, ration crackers, and miscellaneous unpalatable rations than we could eat or cared to eat, so we were only too glad to give the extra to such an appreciative people.

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In Normandy we met a few Normans that could speak English and a number of the fellows in the unit could speak French so we were able to get our laundry done and get a little cider now and then without any trouble.

When we left Normandy, went into Brittany and into France proper we still were greeted with flags waving, loud cheers, and the two finger sign of "V" for Victory. We were given glasses of wine, fresh eggs, and even vegetables, and apples. The Normans and the French are far better looking than the English. The little children are pretty and even the old men and old ladies look ~~not~~ healthy and are good looking. Also, there are a lot of good looking and beautiful girls. After England they looked especially good. The English people have such poor complexions and no shape at all. They are either thin faced and white or overly ruddy and fat. The French people look more like people from home.

The farther we went into France the more we found that the people were more interested in doing things for us for the money or rations that we could give them. They were glad to see us, but still not so overjoyed as the Normans were. The influence of the Germans in parts of France remained to some extent. Apparently parts of France were not hurt by the German occupation at all. Wherever this was the case the people were excited about the present turn of War and the great show of troops that moved into their vicinity, etc. but didn't seem to feel that a yoke had been lifted.

When we finally were stopped practically on the German border of France we were in a community where the population was quite a mixture of German, French, Italian, Polish, and what-have-you. They were not too friendly but not hostile in any way. One could walk around town or travel on the street car from one town to another, patronize cafes (they would be called taverns at home or pubs in England), or go anywhere he pleased and feel perfectly safe from harm at the hands of the population. They just have been under German domination, French domination, then German again so many times that they just accept whichever power has the upper hand at the time.

Here in Germany we are at present, and have gone through some very beautiful country. The farming country is apparently very fertile and well cared for. Soil conservation seems to play a great part in the life of the German farmer. Apparently the German farmer plants crops in his fields by sections so that no complete field is planted with the same crop and subjected to hard usage at one time. The farmers go about their normal planting and cultivating as if nothing had happened. Some times I wonder what this is all about.

Since I have been overseas I have seen London, Bristol, ~~and~~ Paris, Luxembourg, and many other smaller cities that are not so famous. Luxembourg impressed me the most of all, though, ~~not~~ because of the fact that it seemed more nearly like a city at home

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than any other city I have seen overseas. They even had nickellodions in the cafes with American records on them. The architecture of the buildings was almost like modern architecture at home. The people dressed like people at home, and from all appearances the city might easily have been right in the good old USA.

You undoubtedly have the map I sent home of the route the XX Corps took in its advance across France. You have not mentioned having received the map, yet, though. If you have it you can readily see where I have been in France up to Verdun. From there on I am afraid that the route of advance is still military information. When I went to Paris I went through Verdun again and passed through Metz, Epernay, Argonne Forest, Etain, and a number of towns that probably would not mean much to you.

I mentioned in one of my other letters about visiting a Nazi slave labor camp and later about visiting still another Concentration Camp. I never dreamed that men could be so cruel as to do the things that were in evidence there. I saw bodies of men piled in a pile about six or eight deep stacked one on top of the other like cord wood in a stack about as long as the width of Dad C's house. Near this stack of bodies was a trailer (four wheeled trailer) with more bodies stacked on it four or five deep. The bodies were hardly recognizable as human beings because they had been starved to death. They were entirely nude (all men and boys).

We visited a hospital in one camp. The hospital building housed 1500 patients in two rooms about the size of a room that we would ordinarily put forty men in if double deck bunks were used. The patients had to sleep on wooden shelve-like bunks with six men to a bin about five feet wide. In one room the healthier patients had one blanket and no mattress for six men. In the room where patients who were operated on stayed they had an old mattress and each patient had one blanket but still six men to a bin. The operating was done in the aisle on a table in the same room with the patients. One of the prisoners had to take the place of a doctor after the Nazis took away the doctor. He told us that thirty and forty men a day ~~XXXXXX~~ went out of the hospital - dead. They were brought there to die. If they were too long about dying they were called into an ante-room for a special consultation with a Nazi doctor and never returned. The body would be found in a pit outside the hospital the next morning.

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At this particular camp the bodies were burned in ~~XXXXXX~~ a crematory. The crematory was the best looking and best constructed building in the camp. The living quarters like the hospital were low squat barracks with rough wooden floors and walls and very poor construction. Enough of that, though.

Today is a lovely day outdoors. We have the doors to the van open and are enjoying the sunshine. I borrowed a camera from ~~XXX~~ one of the boys and had several pictures taken of myself during the noon hour today. I hope that they turn out ok and I will send them to you. You have been wanting some pictures badly and I told you that I would send some as soon as you sent some film, so will try to keep my end of the bargain now.

Honey, I am sorry if I haven't been writing enough of the news about my experiences, my work, the fellows I work with, etc., but a good deal of the things I would like to write about are ~~XXXXXX~~ military information. Our everyday work is strictly secret being administrative work for the War Department in connection with strength reports, casualties, etc., and there is so little I can tell about the work, the unit, or any of the equipment that we use that would not reveal something about matters ~~that~~ highly classified and restricted information. I do not want my letters all cut up by the censor. Incidentally, have you been receiving any letters that were cut up or had parts blotted out? You never mention if my letters have any part cut out or blotted out and I have wondered about it a various times. The censor does not tell us if we write things we should not and often he may cut out things that we think should go by. On the other hand, if nothing has been cut out of my letters it would give me an idea of what I can say without having it cut out.

It may be "Victory in Europe Day" but there is apparently no difference in things here. There is not too much excitement even. A few fellows who had been saving a bottle of liquor for VE Day got feeling good last night and nearly everyone had some German beer from a nearby brewery. I drank one bottle of German beer myself and joined the gab fest that lasted until quite late last night. I didn't write any letters. But we all know that very few of the fellows we know will get home in the next six months, and undoubtedly we will either go to CBI or stay here in the Army of Occupation. Tomorrow will tell.

Honey, that is all for now. Maybe I can write more a little later tonight. But for now, darling, I send you my love and a kiss and a promise of everlasting love and devotion. You mean everything to me, darling, and always will. My whole life is devoted to you and Laura. My present day life is one partly of living for today and partly living for the day when it will be possible for me to give you and Laura the things you so rightly deserve and shall have, god willing.

I love you, Shirley, and always will. Stay as sweet, as lovely, and as wonderful for me as always.

Your loving husband,

*Cliff*

Hello again, honey. To add a bit to this letter and answer a little about the men in the unit I will try to give you a few ideas about the men in the 38th.

Our Captain is well liked personally and most of the men like him as commanding officer. Some have slight complaints about the way he does not take any action that requires much effort to make things better for his men. All in all I like him. He is a man about 28, has been married about three years, has a daughter born since we came overseas, and is just another GI sweating out the end of the War so he can go home to his wife and baby. I know no bad about him and would say that his character, ideals, etc. are the best.

Our two lieutenants are liked by some of the men and more or less disliked by others. The only complaint I have about them is that they were so strictly "book officers" when we went into operation that they got a name for themselves that they can never live down so long as the same men are in the unit. They both are better officers now and almost human at times.

We have a Regular Army master sergeant and three other Regular Army men in the unit. One is the Administration Supervisor that I have mentioned before. The master sergeant is considered to be the first sergeant of the unit and is chief clerk. He is well liked, but very few of us have much use for the Regular Army. Most of the Regular Army boys, including three of the four in our unit, have no moral scruples, no ideals, and are a pretty tough lot. They are peacetime soldiers that were out for adventure and good time at someone's expense other than their own.

We have some highly specialized men in our unit as it is a unit that requires quite a high degree of intelligence and skill. A few of the men were IBM employees before the War or worked with IBM equipment, but many went to a special school ~~IX~~ near Washington D.C. and studied MRU work. In order to get into this school they had to have a fairly high IQ. For this reason I am in a group of men that has a very high IQ average as compared with the Army as a whole.

Not quite half of the men in the unit are married. Some of the men are definitely married and act accordingly, but about two-thirds of those that are married do not act the way I think a married man should act. I always ~~have~~ contended that the Army will bring out the best or the worst in a man.

I would like to tell you more about the men in the unit but hesitate to write about them in letters that go through our unit censor because in a unit as small as ours everyone knows everyone else and the Officers know every man. I would not want ~~IKWF~~ to write anything about the men that is bad because it might influence the opinions of the Officers. It might be ok to write about the fellows I run around with the most such as Max, Porky, Rex, and two boys named Ken because I have only good to say about them.

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I will write more about the fellows in later letters, honey, since you have made inquiry. I had one picture taken of the fellows who work in the van with me, except Max. Max is now on the night shift, as I told you before. I will get a picture of him later, though.

Well, darling, I must sign off now to listen to Churchill's speech on "VE Day". Goodbye now, darling.

I love you, honey.

Yours forever,

*Cliff*

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