

gang:

It's been an eventful week. I know how much you have read about us in the papers so there is no real reason for me to go into details about what our triumphant march thru Rome was like. Needless to say, nothing which the newspapers wrote could possibly exaggerate the actual occurrences which we experienced. The people were wild with joy, and since our group was one of the very first thru the town they really climbed all over us. I'll bet half of the troops were almost drunk with the wine that the Italians were offering to us as we drove by slowly thru the very heart of the city. Army traffic was heavy and since the foot troops were walking thru the city ahead of us our progress was naturally slow, a thing which we did not regret because it gave us the opportunity to be stationary in spots for long periods. Inhabitants were lined up in the middle of the street many deep on each side of the traffic, so that traffic in the opposite direction got thru only with difficulty. Whenever we stopped, which as I said was frequently, they climbed all over our vehicles and practically every man in the company was kissed by some girl or other, even this old man being threatened with it. As is usual in these cities which have been occupied by the Jerries, people were hungry and begged for candy, chocolate, chewing gum, and cigarettes. They had already learned that they could get no food from the troops because we were eating K rations which results in us having only enough food for ourselves, particularly if one has a good appetite, and believe me the American soldier has that. Rome, shows no sign of the war, altho the cities to the south and north of it all show the terrible destruction that war can bring. It is a fortunate thing that it had been declared an open city because it is really a beautiful city and it would have been a crime to destroy it. I had the opportunity of seeing a number of famous buildings, most famous of which was the coliseum, outside of which I ate my dinner, surrounded by a group of Italians who watched my every bite, and St. Peters and Vatican city which I saw from the distance. I have had the opportunity of seeing many cities in the U.S. but we have nothing to compare with the beauty of Rome, and I include Los Angeles and Washington D.C. Our big regret was that we didn't get to remain in the city, because we had the Krauts on the run and you can't stay in one position for long when you are chasing someone who is in full flight. In fact it has been quite a problem keeping up with the troops. They have been pushing forward so rapidly that it is all we can do to give them medical service. Our unit has finally been pulled out of the lines to give us a rest, which believe me was much needed. We stopped at my present location yesterday, and learned that we were 15 miles behind the front lines. To-day and it is still morning, I learned that we are 35 miles behind the front, so that gives you an idea as to how rapidly the troops have been advancing. If we don't move out soon, we are going to be rear echelon troops. Actually the only danger that now exists for us is air raid, which we experience every night. However, Jerry throws only small bombs, compared to ours, and all of these Italian houses have either wine cellars which are so large that I can house all of my men in them without crowding, or have caves which serve as excellent air raid shelters. Our airplanes, on the other hand, have been doing a terrific amount of damage to the German lines of communication and evacuation. All along the roads which we go over are strewn Jerry vehicles. I saw 42 of them plus several tanks in a 2 mile trip yesterday, and I am told that it is much worse farther up the road. I'm sure that Jerry can't keep up taking a beating like this indefinitely, particularly now that the second front has started. As far as that second front is concerned, we are in almost complete ignorance about it other than knowing that it was successful and seems to be progressing satisfactorily at present. We are waiting for our copies of Stars and Stripes to come so that we can have some more definite information. Of course, the news is actually two days old by the time we receive it but still it is the latest news that we have and we know it is authentic rather than rumor. I have been sending Ros complete letters of my experiences here, but since we have been on the move so much I haven't been able to type them with the result that I have been unable to make a carbon copy for Soph to be forwarded to all of you. I'm sorry for that because my experiences have been extremely interesting, and I know that the letters are much too long for Soph to recopy for you. Maybe after the war you will get a chance to read them. Believe me the trip thru Rome was worth all of the hardships which we had undergone prior to it in order to get there. I just hope that things keep going as they are, because when you move fast it means that you are meeting little opposition with the result that casualties are light, and that is one thing for which we are thankful. I had my first death in the company last week, which really isn't bad when you consider that we are practically front line troops, and actually the boy that was killed was hit by a shell when he was right up in the front with the infantry. However, it was too much to expect to be able to go thru the war without any fatalities whatsoever.

The houses in which we have been setting up have been very interesting. We almost set up in an apartment building in Rome, but I was afraid that it would violate the international agreement on open cities, so after great difficulty I found a house, or rather a group of houses on a hillside with a beautiful view, far enough from the main road so that it would not be affected by the bombing or strafing of the road. The Italians who live in these homes are happy to have us in their houses, moving into a few rooms while we take the rest of the house. All houses in Italy are tremendous compared to those in the states. A ten room house is relatively small. In fact, except in the country south of here, we have yet to go into a house with less than ten rooms. Rome itself is chiefly a city of 6, 7, and 10 floor apartment buildings and occupies far less area than does an American city of comparable population. We have lived in a castle, in houses which would look well in a Hollywood background, and for the other extreme in open fields. However, except on occasion we have lived chiefly in houses, spending our nights in the wine cellars and caves in order to be unaffected by the air raids which occur only at night. Jerry doesn't seem to have the air power to come over in the day time, thank goodness. I could write for days on my experiences over here, but it would only be a repetition of what