

8 May 1945 2200

Good evening, darling:

I'm a bit late in getting started on my letter and as a result will probably have to finish it in the morning. We've been doing a bit of celebrating here, drinking up the good whiskey which I had promised the boys a long time ago for their victory celebration party. And how they did go for it. I figured that 15 quarts should really be enough for them, since some of the men don't drink, but they ran thru the first 15 quarts as if it was water and ended up by drinking 24 quarts. We had to put a stop to it or they would have continued indefinitely. As a result I've been putting a few men to bed and sitting around shmoozing with the other men, so that I didn't have a chance to get started on my letter.

We are still in the same hotel in the same beautiful picturesque area, and even more comfortable than before for we have fixed up tables outside for the men to eat their meals at. We hate to think of having to leave this place but I understand that we will have to go back under battalion control within a few days. I only hope that we will find a place even half as nice as this one. I have my doubts, though. Well, I won't try to cross that bridge until I come to it.

Yesterday I took a long trip in the jeep to the town where my man, Cross did his disappearing act. It is a typically Austrian town, altho still within the Italian border. This fellow, Cross, seems to have been a lone wolf and did not take the other boys into his confidence, and as a result we hardly know anything about what went on. All we know is that he asked Katko, another one of our men, to accompany him to a house in the vicinity (house unspecified, however) where he had noticed a mädchen, and also to go to a bar with him. However, Katko refused because he was afraid that the company might have to move out while they were away. As it was the company did not move out until the following afternoon. Cross did not return to the company that night and was not seen from the time he left the company, shortly after its arrival in the area. On my arrival in the town I immediately went to the provost marshal of the regiment which was now occupying the town and reported his absence to the major in charge. He promised to do all he could to locate Cross. I also reported the incident to Duncan and Leip wrote out a story of the entire incident for the information of the colonel and also personnel. I am quite worried because I have heard of some of the stunts that the women of Germany have tried on American soldiers - enticing them into their apartments and killing them. I certainly can't think of any logical reason for Cross to have disappeared otherwise. If he had gotten hurt he would have gone thru our station as a patient; and certainly it is that he would have been most unwise to have gone AWOL so late in the war, and Cross was nobody's fool. My business in the town having been taken care of I decided to look around a bit. The girls of the town had the long blonde pigtails, the extra pinafores or aprons over their dresses, the rosy complexion that is so characteristic of the Tyrol. They are pretty things when young but seem to get pretty pudgy and coars looking as they get older. The town is quaint looking, with many gables on the houses. I stopped in one store where I was greeted with "Guten Tag". These people are no more Italian than I, and I'm sure that their sympathies are all with the Germans. However, the proprietess was not averse to doing business with an American. They had carved wooden figures, typical of the region, and they were just what I was looking for, so I bought two of them, a male and female figure. They remind me somewhat of Edie's Lenci dolls. I also bought a few postcards. I also had considered taking a run a few miles farther north to see a famous spot, but since they have roads under control I was afraid that I would be turned back and possibly have to explain to the higher ups what I was doing in a vicinity so far from where I belonged, and decided against it.

I had taken Tag's camera along on my trip because Leip had told me how beautiful the scenery was, and believe me he had not exaggerated. It is hard to believe that this country can be so beautiful even tho you are looking right at it. Every curve of the road surprised one with new breath-taking scenes. One cannot describe the difference in these, and yet one could gaze on them all day long without tiring of the view. The gorgeous tall evergreens covering the mountain slopes gradually decreasing in size until finally only snow remained



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turbulent stream; a city nestled in the hollow created by two mountains; a little valley peacefully snuggling between hoary-haired mountains. Here was practically no sign of war. But yes, aside from some beautifully camouflaged German bivouac areas and buildings and a German fortress at an important road junction I saw something which explained the meaning of the simple statement which I so frequently saw in the newspaper, viz. "Marshalling yards in northern Italy were also bombed." Well, I saw a marshalling yard, which is merely a widened place in a railroad with numerous tracks in it where trains are made up for their trips. This was the scene of the most complete devastation of an area that I have yet seen. Not one of hundreds of railroad cars were left undamaged, the tracks and roadbeds were completely destroyed, and in fact, to give you a slight idea of the force of our attacks, one railroad car was lying on the opposite side of the road running past the railroad yards, and when you picture the yard as being a good 10 feet below the level of the road you may get some idea of the force of that explosion. Certain it was that the Germans couldn't move anything at all thru that marshalling yard, and it was well beyond any quick repair. The Jerries had prepared themselves for similar destruction of bridges on the main highways by having previously placed sufficient numbers of logs to repair any such damage quickly. I had planned taking some pictures of some of the beautiful scenes, but being war minded I decided to take a picture of this destruction first. As luck would have it, Tag had given me a roll which had been completely used up, altho he believed that he still had 14 pictures remaining on the roll.

Soon after my return Frank Duncan, Johnnie Newcock, and Brady from HQ dropped in to see us. They had a tire that needed fixing and under our present set up we are taking care of their repairs. I spoke with Frank for quite some time, about what may be in store for us in the future (neither of us knew at the time that the war was over in every way except officially). That got us to talking about rotation and I asked him if he knew anything about the latest group of men going home. I told him that I felt that we had been done out of our quota. He immediately told me that I always had the idea that headquarters was trying to do my company out of something. Could be, after all I've worked with those fellows for two years and have seen them take plenty of advantages which they didn't allow us collecting companies. I told him that any time I had a complaint it was a legitimate one. He felt that headquarters is always careful in its consideration of everything which it does, but I really feel that they do not have the viewpoint of the collecting company and do things more for their convenience rather than for the justice involved in it. A point for example would have been the last incident in which they radioed for their man to hurry back in order to go home, but did not take the trouble to radio to me for a man's name so that he might be able to go. Instead they sent two men. I hope to find out more about that when I get back there with them. Oh well, the war is over now and maybe we will all get home before too much longer. Frank remarked on the fact that I had had 3 officers go home with no other company in the battalion having sent any home. However, I explained that the officers are taken from a battalion standpoint whereas the men are taken from company quotas.

I would hate to think of them looking on the officers quotas as company quotas now, for that would mean that I would be one of the last officers to get to go home. Maybe we'll all be there before that time arrives, though. I certainly hope so. Frank looked around our place and really appreciated the swell set up that we have. He thought it even nicer than his, despite the fact that he, too is located in a hotel and on the shores of a lake to boot. He like us, is completely surrounded by Germans living in the better hotels in the vicinity. It is really a peculiar situation, this intermingling of German and American troops without any fraternization. One will drive along and see two German and two American MPs on a road, all armed with rifles, standing guard at the same spot, the Germans stopping German vehicles and the Americans stopping our vehicles. I would never have believed such a thing were possible if I weren't living thru the experience. Darling, I'm going to stop for tonight. I have time in the