

Good afternoon, my sweet:

10 May 1945 Thursday 1645

I have just returned from a long trip in search of Cross, and this time my trip was more fruitful than the last time, for I found him and brought him back with me. It's an interesting story and I'll tell you about it either late in this ~~story~~ letter or in tomorrow's.

I was telling you about the Jerry plane that landed near us. We were all excited about it because we had never seen one of those devils so close. We didn't know whether to be worried about it or not, but figured that if he was intending to attack he would never be flying so low, so we stood around and watched him circle right over our building and then start to fly down the valley when a flare was shot off by an officer over near the airfield, and the plane turned around and came back to make a perfect pancake landing. Altho the place he landed was a full three quarters of a mile from the nearest soldiers it took only a few minutes before his plane was so thickly surrounded by GIs that it was impossible to get near it. The souvenir hunting GIs immediately relieved him of his helmet and his parachute. It was only a matter of a few minutes until the local military authorities were there in vehicles and had the pilot and his two passengers, one male and one female, on their way to headquarters for questioning. I later learned that the pilot had been at Prague and had received orders to fly northwest into Germany, but decided that he would rather land close to his home and so flew southwest. He did not know that he would find American soldiers here. He was cussing the Americans quite vehemently when I walked over to the plane. The girl with him was thoroughly frightened, I don't know whether from the pancake landing or because of all the GIs around her. Guards were immediately put on the plane so that no one could destroy it. It was a cinch that no one could fly it away for the propellers had been smashed by the landing.

Yesterday we broke our hearts by having to give up our German vehicles. We knew that sooner or later the order would come down for us to turn them in, but we had not expected it so quickly. I didn't mind giving up the sedan but I hated to give up the Dodge 2 1/2 ton truck because we were able to load all of our extra stuff in it and thus be able to move the whole company at one time. As it is, without it we have to shuttle, which is no good when one makes long moves. I understand that the reason they took the vehicles up so quickly was so that they would have additional transportation to move the Jerries back to the processing centers. The big move seems to have started in earnest and it should not be too long before we have all of them under lock and key, as it were. The place to which we had to take the vehicles was quite a distance to our rear and we had several funny incidents occur because of the way the road splits some miles to our rear. It seems that in order to continue going to the rear, one has to make a very sharp turn, rather than take the natural curve of the road at this split. The natural curve brings one right back to this spot after completing a large circle. We had to put up 10 men from the engineers for the night because they had made this error. They had started from their company, only 4 kilometers away at noon, had made the wrong turn, then realizing that they had gone wrong tried to correct it with another turn and ended up many miles away before they decided that they had better turn around. They arrived here after having driven 150 miles in 7 or 8 hours. We had several others here who had made the same error in the turn and completed the circuit.

Yesterday morning Macri, Kelly, and I took a trip to find some guns for the group at headquarters. It seemed that the colonel and Strozzi had not gotten any rifles, and since they had heard we were in the heart of a souvenir "gold mine" they sent word up to ask us to get them a few. I dropped in at several of the infantry companies where I had seen large quantities of guns a day or two before. It seems that they had turned these in to regiment and the few they had left they had to hold on to because they had given the Germans receipts for them, and therefore they would have to account for each gun. I finally decided to go over to see Col. English and get his permission to pick up 6 of them. However, he was busy with our general, so I decided to talk to Brennan, who is the CO of the regimental headquarters company. It turned out that he had more guns than he knew what to do with and so I went over to his CP where I found a room which they had nailed closed to keep everyone out. It



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1st sergeant had to force open the door for us, and what an arsenal we then beheld. It seems that two German companies occupied the building and the GIs had taken up all their weapons and placed it in this one room. We could have had as many guns as we wanted, but ended up taking eight instead of the six which we had intended taking. I kept one for myself and may give it to Mel Shaw or someone else in town to do some deer hunting with. It is supposed to be the best gun for that purpose. One would think that I was interested in guns the way I'm collecting them, but I don't expect to shoot any of those that I bring home. In fact I will probably give them away or even better, sell them to some rear echelon soldier. We shall see.

I mentioned in yesterday's letter about the Germans sunning themselves on a hill behind our hotel. It is about a half mile away and altho we can see them plainly, yet the boys are not satisfied because the German Wacs sun themselves right along with the soldiers, so the boys have scraped together every binoculars we have around. I understand that the Wacs dress more or less as do our girls in the states in sun suits. There seems to be some messing around between the males and females, but nothing serious. However, I guess that Hitler's teachings of babies for the Vaterland has not been forgotten just because the war is over, and I imagine that morals are pretty low from our conservative viewpoint. Since it is a courtmartial offense to be caught fraternizing with members of the German army, and since the Wacs are a part of the army, none of my men can give me any definite information on this subject. I have noticed that the majority of the German Wacs pretty well ignore our soldiers as they walk down the road, but I don't know what their reaction would be if the soldiers approached them and talked to them. Of course, Wance, Willie, and Crane seemed to believe that they might have some luck with a bit of persistence. I wouldn't know. That reminds me - Sal, Willie, and Roginski came up Monday AM. Supposedly they came after souvenirs but I know that Willie brought the other two up because ~~the thought that they could go to our former hotel and do some "good" where they had failed before.~~ He had two good ones with him. However, when I told him what the set up was he realized that even this bold triumvirate would not be able to get by the guards, and returned to the rear shortly later.

There is a young (under 30) Austrian who stays here at the hotel, being apparently a relative of the landlady, who is the picture of health and has my curiosity aroused. He does not speak any Italian at all, which is a funny thing for a native around here, practically all of whom are bilingual, but who prefer German. He was pointing out various mountain peaks to me telling me which ones he had climbed and how long it had taken him. One in the closest group took him 8 hours to scale. He says that it is wonderful to get to the top of these peaks and look out over the countryside. Not a sound can be heard up there. I imagine it gives somewhat of the feeling of awe that we had when we looked down into the Grand Canyon. I thought that our landlady hated Italians, but this young fellow despises them. He insists that they won't work and try to live off the Austrians in the area. These people are going to be an unhappy lot for I feel pretty sure that the Tyrol will continue to remain in Italian hands.

Yesterday I received a phone call from one of the crew at regimental personnel about my recommendations for combat medics badge. I had sent in a list of litter bearers, ambulance drivers, and liaison men for the award, and Thompson had indorsed it. But it seems that division is awaiting an interpretation from the higher headquarters as to whether collecting company men are eligible for the award. If they don't give it to these men, at the very least, it will be a criminal error, for these boys have been right up at the battalion aid stations, and have endangered their lives just as much as many of the battalion aid medics. In fact, they have been farther forward than the regimental aid medics, which men are eligible for the award. I imagine that higher headquarters will see this point if they have a man who has worked up from a smaller job with forward unit, but if he is someone who has been a rear echelon soldier all thru this campaign he will ~~not~~ probably make the error of considering these men as part of the collecting company which in his tactical book is located anywhere from a half mile to several miles behind the front line troops. That will be really unfair.



These civilians over here are amazed to see the good quality of the food which we get. They have been used to seeing the miserable rations of the Germans, and then to see our relatively lavish rations simply overwhelms them. They were greatly impressed when we told them that every single bit of food which we get comes from the United States and that we do not have to depend on any country in which we happen to be to feed us. Major Butterfield was telling me about the German Major who is acting as provost marshal for the German troops in this vicinity. The first night we were in this area he was busy working at regiment at supper time so they fed him. They happened to have only C rations at the time, the new C rations which are not at all bad, and they opened a can for him. His eyes went wide with delight and he said, "No wonder you Americans can win wars, when you eat food like this." And that was C rations which don't compare at all with our B rations.

Last night, while I was sitting here and writing your letter, Frank, one of m. ambulance drivers came in quite drunk from his beer ration. He told me that he wanted me to demote him to a private because he didn't feel that he was capable enough to hold his job. He had feelings of inferiority because of a lack of schooling and also because of an incident which occurred in the states in which he is supposed to have struck a man who subsequently died. However, the army proved to its own satisfaction that Frank had nothing to do with the incident. Well, in a most circumloquacious manner, he came around to the main reason for his coming in to talk to me. It seems that he had a pretty good idea where I might find my missing man Cross. It seems that the two of them had been hailed into a room by a woman in the town in which the station had set up. They went up for the purpose of eating food, and had a couple of eggs apiece. Then the Cross got the idea that he could spend some time with the woman and Frank, playing second fiddle on such a piece not appealing to his esthetic sense, left for the company area. The company moved a few blocks away Cross had been looking for the ambulance stayed at the aid station, so that if contacting the ambulance. Since Frank knew just where this house was located I sent him to bed to get some rest so that we could go up there this morning. We did just that with good results, about which I shall tell you in tomorrow's letter.

I told you about the famous people whom we had recaptured from the Jerries. Michael, one of my ambulance drivers, had to accompany the convoy on its trip to the rear. There are 133 people in the group, altho not all of these were taken back at the same time. The group included among its more famous members Kurt von Schuschnigg, wife, and son, Leon Blum and wife, Hjalmar Schacht, and Pastor Niemöller. Someone got the idea that it would be a swell time to get some autographs and so Mike had a number of these people autograph a 100 lire note of his, as did Burke, his associate driver. The people were not to be spoken to unless they showed desired of talking, which they all did. At noon they stopped for chow, eating C ration and hot coffee. It was then that Mike got to talking to a Mrs. van Rosenthal and her daughter and they invited him to ride with them in their car. He had quite an interesting time, learning that the husband of the woman had been a leading light in the German army until the time of Hitler's attempted assassination. He learned at first hand a bit about the horrors of Buchenwald and Dachau. He also talked to the only American in the group, a fellow named Cushing, who has a life story like one of Hemingway's characters, having been in the battle of Spain, in the world war, captured by the Germans and escaped from several of their concentration camps only to give himself up at other ones because he was sure that he would be picked up and probably put to death if he didn't give himself up. He gave some of the methods by which the men in camp outsmarted their German tormentors, but I'll have to save that until some other time because of censorship. He seems to have been able to avoid death because he led the Germans to believe that Bette Cushing was his sister, rather than a 2nd or 3rd cousin, and impressed them with the fact that she was married to a Roosevelt (he didn't tell them about her divorce). Then there was a Prince Leopold of Prussia, a Russian named Stalin who claimed he was about a 4th cousin, and probably was altho some of us thought at first that he was Stalin's son. That was quite