

Linz, Austria
23 July 1945.

Florence, Sweetheart:

Once again the sun is shining for me, having received your first letter in almost two weeks yesterday. Although I wrote you a short V-Mail in reply yesterday, I have every intention of doing a much better job of letter-writing to-day. I returned from the trip to Berchtesgaden too late last night to do justice to what I have to relate about the trip, so to-day you get the story. This letter is being started in the morning, and will be continued during the day and until after mail call to-night. Will let you know whether or not I receive any mail from you to-day later on in the letter.

Your double air mail letters dated July 13th and 14th reached me yesterday, and I need hardly add as to the joy I experienced at being able to read all the good news from the Monticello sector. Your swell letters were more than a climax to a grand day, and had I known that one of your letters awaited me, I think I would have forgotten about the trip to get the letter sooner. It was good to learn that you and Jimmy are in excellent health and spirits. I'm also very happy the folks visited you and I trust they had a good time. No doubt seeing you and Jimmy enjoying an elegant vacation made them very happy. I do hope you managed a few snaps of everybody. The digest of all the other current events you included made me feel like a part of a family again. Eleanor has always been generous to children of the family, but I hope you are not letting her spoil that boy of ours.

Meeting so many people you know in the country must help to break the monotony of the days. Ruth Suvall has always been a lot of fun, and I guess she's having as much trouble getting the right man as is Eleanor. I have never written the Rockwitts since my induction, and I don't intend to, but I don't mind your giving them my best regards. That's still a bit too good for them but I can spare it. I suppose as time goes on you will be running in to others, so take a blanket expression of best wishes to cover all or any you meet, but don't give them my address, even upon request.

In many ways it is to our advantage to be stationed in a town occupied by an Infantry Div. They usually set up many innovations to entertain their men, and we horn in on these things. For instance the 65th Div., which is in Linz, runs the movies, the Symphony concerts, the Red Cross doughnut center, a boat ride on the Danube, an excursion to Hitler's Retreat, a baseball team made up of many former big-league ball players, track, swimming and soft-ball teams, and almost anything else they can think up. My outfit is permitted to attend these events, which gives me an outlet for spare time, besides writing and thinking of you. As I wrote you the other day I took advantage of going to Berchtesgaden yesterday. I am going to try to describe to you the trip and what I saw. Under separate cover I forwarded you some circulars describing the place and surrounding country. I am sure you too would have been thrilled by the trip and sights, but at the nonce the best I can offer you are pictures I took, and every assurance that in spirit you were right there with me every moment of the day. I realize that's a poor substitute for what we feel for each other, but we know only too well that's the best I can do at present.

1890

Like everything else in the army even a sight-seeing trip has to follow military procedure. Accordingly it was necessary to make application to the Sergeant to be included, and it was my luck to be selected. This is the first group to have been picked, so you can readily see the honor I was accorded. The 65th Div has allotted us 30 men per day to make this trip, so if I had not gone yesterday, I could have gone any other day, see what I mean...but in the Army someone is always taking credit for extending a privilege to somebody else..oh well.. The train is scheduled to depart from Linz daily at 7 AM. Not to be late we were awakened at 5, dressed, ate breakfast, and reported to the train at 6.15. That's right, we then waited until 7 for the train to leave. However the train was well set up for the sole enjoyment of the trip. We had the finest first class coaches, an up to date dining car, and an electric locomotive to haul us. Plenty of room for everyone, with enough space for each man to lay down on a seat, much less sit 8 to a compartment. The weather was ideal, sunny, not too warm, and not a cloud in the sky. An ideal day for sightseeing and picture taking and I went prepared to do both. I took about 12 or 15 snaps, and only hope they come out good.

Once the train pulled out the officer in charge put us completely at our ease by telling us to do as we damn please, have a good time and try to think and act as though we were American civilians again. This was easy especially when chow time arrived. Sat at a table in the dining car, and civilian waiters served us. Lunch consisted of boiled beef, spinach, beets, peaches and coffee. Supper on the return trip included roast chicken and stuffing, peas, potatoes, apple cake and coffee. Everything was hot and tasted extra special. The distance from Linz to Berchtesgaden is about 110 miles each way, so you can see it made quite a day of it.

Well we made ourselves comfortable by removing our shirts, unlacing our combat boots and opening all the windows. After a fast, delightful trip thru Salzburg we reached our destination at 11.30 AM. Enroute just outside of Salzburg the guide on the train pointed out the Castle at which the present king of Belgium is living with his family. They sure picked out a lovely spot for the family. Arriving in the town of Berchtesgaden we were placed in jeeps and other cars for the long 4 mile ride up the mountainside to Hitler's former hangout. This town is situated in the heart of the Bavarian Alps, and any attempt to even begin to describe the scenery we saw and passed thru enroute would require the efforts of a writer better acquainted with the language than I am. I need hardly add it was the most wonderful I had ever seen, and I now begin to comprehend why so many people become mountain climbers. I have tried to capture the beauty and grandeur of the scenery with my camera, but I must await the results to know whether I accomplished my purpose. In my mind the scenes will forever remain something out of this world, and possibly the next, too.

The jeep ride up the mountainside is a thriller but hardly as exciting as your imagination might lead you to believe. The road is well flanked by tall trees, and there are no precipices to worry about. However it does not take very long, and one is preoccupied looking at the peaks of the adjoining mountains that the height means very little. It may interest you, however that I was 8000 feet up, and that some of the nearby peaks were looking down on us. How the American fliers ever spotted his place so easily is beyond me, but after looking at what is left of the 30-odd buildings which composed his estate there, I must admit that the bombardier had

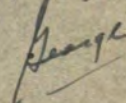
eagle eyes. Not a building was left standing or usable, and the surrounding landscape and forest surely received quite a pummeling. There are hundreds of tree stumps standing with the rest of the tree blown off. For the benefit of the sight-seers, who consist only of GI's and officers, many of the buildings have been designated by a sign. We took many snaps of each other in front of these buildings and signs, as well as exploring the remains. The famous window thru which Adolf used to look at the rest of the world is still intact, although the glass is no longer there. My dearest, it was a most peculiar feeling standing there in the shrine of Naziism realizing that only a short time ago the arch disciple of war had also been there. It is no stretch of the imagination to comprehend how a small man could have looked out upon the world and dreamed of world power and superiority. To add insult to injury several of us pissed in the backyard. All over the walls of his house are inscribed the many names of Jews who had preceded us. We also browsed around thru Goering's house, the SS police home and others. Practically nothing remains but rubble as my snaps will disclose when they are developed.

After several hours of admiring the scenery and hating the man who messed our past few years up, in addition to his other infamous exploits, we went back to the town. Here we visited the American Red Cross club, had coffee and doughnuts, and picked up the travel circular I sent you under separate cover. Then decided to walk about town and snap some of the more interesting sights and characters. The town is mainly devoted to hotels, and the inhabitants dress very quaintly. All the men wear those Alpine outfits, but the pants are painted with various designs. The presentation of a cigarette to one character persuaded him to pose with me in a shot that should warm the cockles of your heart when you see it. If my camera failed me yesterday I will really be a sad sack. It was a tired group of men who finally turned their steps towards the railway station. The sun was plenty high in the sky yet, but our trip back was scheduled for 3.30PM, so we left the land of the slaughterer of humans and started back for Linz. One of these days I'll be starting back for America and you, my only love.

It is now later in the day, mail call brought me your letter containing your July 3rd and 4th letters. Having received your letter of yesterday I was two weeks ahead of the news in your latest letter, but each additional line I read makes me very happy. No other mail arrived, which still leaves me in the dark about Bob's latest whereabouts. Jimmy must be getting to be quite a boy, as I know you wouldn't rave about him unless he were unusual. Believe you me, honey, as long as he is normal I'll be the happiest man in the world to hold him and you in my arms. I have no idea as to how soon that will be, but tell my folks I don't intend surprising them when I get shipped for home. I will write in advance, definitely.

All is well with me, hope this finds you and Jimmy in fine health and spirits, as well as everyone else. Kiss the little rascal for me and I will kiss you both in mind. My very best to everybody,

As ever,



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