

Riesa, Germany
May 13, 1945

Dear Mother,

I had hoped to let you hear from me much sooner than this, but our present situation is a bit peculiar. You see we are still under Russian authority and our officers are in contact with the Russian officers planning our evacuation. This has been going on for some time now and many of the fellows have taken off on their own to reach American lines. But the roads in Germany are packed with refugees who are infected with typhus, and water along the way is contaminated. Besides, it is 75 miles to the Americans at Halle and that is more than I care to walk in the hot sun. So I am remaining here with the large group waiting for an organized movement. Here we have good food and medical attention with nothing to worry about.

A red cross truck has been here several times with kits and cigarettes. I will try to send this letter with them the next time they come. However, as we expect to leave any day, perhaps I will get home as soon as this letter. Once we move from here on truck we will go directly to Halle. There it is possible that we will be flown to the coast of France and then by boat sail directly to the States without loss of much time. And when we do get to the States we will be given 21 day furloughs.

That's the situation in a nut shell. There is so much to tell that I can't put it all in a letter. The last six or eight months have been about the most eventful, in an unusual way, of my whole life, and it is only by the grace of God that I am still in good health and all in one piece. Many of my ~~comrades~~ friends were not so fortunate. But that is a long grim story.

You will no doubt be interested in my present set up so I will tell you a little of it. We left Stalay IVB the 2nd and marched to Piesau, a fairly large town located on the west bank of the Elbe. We are living in former German soldier's quarters - very nice buildings with running water and electricity. Norman Brust, who I became very good friends with, and I are in a former officer's room. Undoubtedly this officer had his wife here for there are twin beds, a dresser, mirrors, & even a stove. We didn't expect to live this comfortably in Germany.

From houses that have been vacated and plundered we have secured a radio, phonograph, a clock that chimes the hours, dishes, silverware, picture for the wall and plenty of food - more food than the

Germans used to give us for 50
 men. The day the war was over
 we cooked a big victory meal
 & invited two other fellows in.
 What a meal it was - meat -
 vegetables - cheese - bread -
 crackers - jam - coffee - and even
 cherry pie. We have all this
 food besides what the Russians
 are feeding us.

The Russians in Russia
 are very friendly to us Americans.
 One Russian officer took Norm
 & I into a German bakery and
 insisted we take at least ten
 loaves of bread. As friendly as
 they are to us though, ~~is not~~
~~one tenth~~ they are ten times
 more unfriendly to the Germans.
 And they have just cause to
 be so too. The German people
 fear the Russians and keep asking
 us if the Americans will take
 over this territory. The Russian
 soldiers think nothing of going
 into a house & taking anything

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they want. They break into locked cabinets and trunks and when they leave the house looks like a tornado had ripped through it. And woe be unto the German that ~~attempts~~ tries to resist for he will undoubtedly be a dead German.

We came across 100 Jewish refugees who were in a German concentration camp for three years. They are in the hospital now suffering from acute malnutrition. Norm & I have collected food and drugs for them (which is a story in itself that I will tell you some day). They are the living ones. There are 50 times their number who are not living because of German treatment which was inhuman. People in the States don't realize how brutal and uncivilized these Germans were in their treatment of political prisoners.

There ~~are~~ some Germans who are decent and didn't advocate the Nazi standards but on the whole they are a race that has had Nazism instilled in their blood & believe me they are rotten right down to the core. When I tell you of the things I have seen and heard you will have no cause whatsoever to doubt my words.

Well enough of that. I hope you will receive this soon & I assure you it won't be long before I'll be on my way home for a 21 day furlough. So start making plans now!

All my love to the family.

Love,
Hershey