

RTC  
117D

Arrived 7/29/44

Co D 117<sup>th</sup> Bn 80 Reg

CAMP JOSEPH T. ROBINSON  
ARIZONA

Aug 20, 1944

Dear Dad and Grace,

I was sure glad to hear from you, I will try to write as often as possible, but I really don't have much time.

I appreciate all you do for Mum and the kids. It sure takes a load off my mind.

The enclosed picture isn't good, but I thought you might like one anyway.

I just finished cleaning my rifle for inspection. I really mean cleaned, it is laid out on my bed in about 35 parts.

I qualified as marksman on the rifle range last week, not the best, but not so bad.

This stationery is crap, but it is all you can get here. In fact it is one of the few things you can get.

We are only 150 miles from Texas, I sure wish I could have gone there.

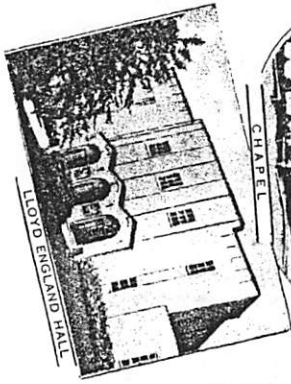
So far I have had four shots and a vaccination. I still have three shots to go. They are taking care of all my teeth and really doing a good job.

We spent 12 hours every day on the range last week, it was over 100° in the shade most of the time, and no shade.

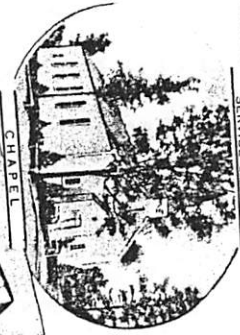
Don't worry about me taking care of myself. The army does that.

as Ever  
Bud

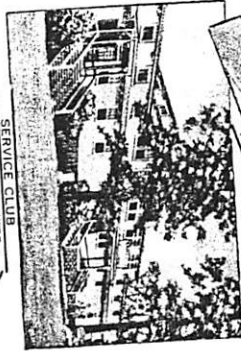
P.S. Will soon..



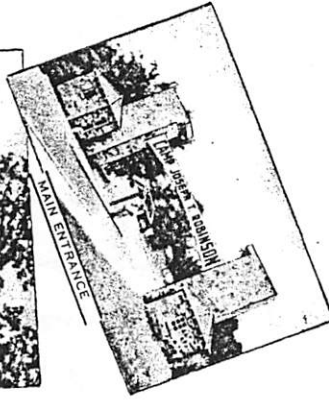
LLOYD ENGLAND HALL



CHAPEL



SERVICE CLUB



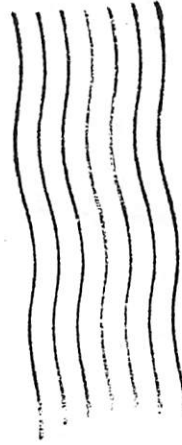
MAIL ENTRANCE

SECOND-FOLD BACK ON THIS LINE

Post Richard Spencer  
ASN 36143459  
Co. D 117 Ba Regt 17  
Camp Robinson  
Arkansas



Mr. and Mrs. James R. Spencer  
1302 Romaine Ave.  
Racine,  
Wisconsin

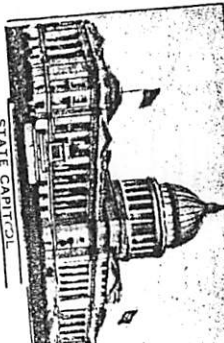


Free

OPEN ON THIS LINE

LAST-FOLD ON THIS LINE

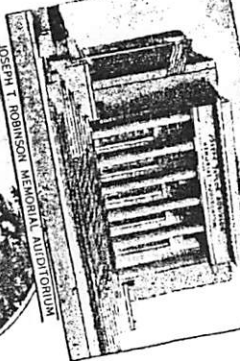
FIRST-FOLD BACK ON THIS LINE



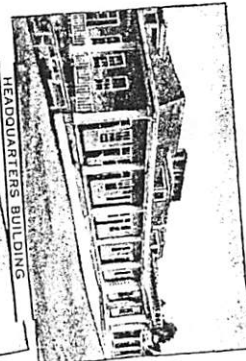
STATE CAPITOL



ARKANSAS WAR MEMORIAL



JOSEPH T. ROBINSON MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM



HEADQUARTERS BUILDING

WORLD WAR II DIARY  
Jan. 1, 1944 - July 1, 1945

Written by:  
Major Dale F. Peterson

January 1, 1944

A new day and the dawning of a new year. Will it be a victorious one? Today we had our fill of turkey, sweet potatoes, corn, pea soup, peaches, coffee and hard candy. This evening three of us slipped down to the kitchen and dug into the cold turkey. I thought of home, as I dug into that pan, for we always "cleaned the bones" in Mother's roasting pan.

We ushered in the New Year with a few volleys, so they would know what to expect in 1944. General Meyer came by to wish us a "Happy New Year". Mother nature handed us a skiff of snow, whipped to a fluff by a high wind. We, of the artillery in the fifth army, have made the following resolution: "Tis better to give than to receive".

January 3, 1944

I registered, or fired, one battery on an enemy observation post today at 9200 yards. We are using a house for a fire direction center. A few enemy shells are also falling in our area. The boys from Arkansas would say "the hulls are sure falling today".

January 8, 1944

Four days ago we were placed in direct support of the 6th Armored Infantry. In this period of time we have fired at Mortars, Infantry, tanks, vehicles and artillery at the rate of two thousand rounds per day. Our busiest night was the 6th. We had missions from the 2nd observation Battalion, 1st Armored Division, 18th F.A. Brigade, 34th Infantry Division and our own observation post. If an artillery man is happiest when he is firing, we must have been well pleased during that period of time.

Don Redman called in a fire mission one night, while I was trying to get some sleep. Lt. Lecy was on duty and plotted the target, which happened to fall below the "No Fire Zone", and just barely in the British Sector. He didn't know quite what to do, so he woke me and together we decided to clear with the British Command Post. During this delay, Don and a couple of men were pinned down with enemy machine guns. The British said, "Well it is your chaps out there, do as you please". We added 200 yards to the range setting and fired one battery 1 round. Back over the radio came the report: "200 over, fire for effect". After a few volleys we waited for a reply. We waited and waited. Trembled, shook, sweat blood, and waited for another report that did not come. We knew we were firing very close to Don and were terrified that one dropped too close. Several hours later, Don called in from an Infantry outpost. When our shells landed the machine gun quit firing. Don left his radio and crawled out. Captain Anderson gave him Hell for leaving the radio where the enemy might find it. All is well that ends well, we pushed the enemy back and Don went back and got his radio.

January 12, 1944

This has been a quiet sort of a day - the kind that makes men become careless. When they become careless, they gather in groups in the open, and then, "Wham" somebody gets hurt. Ragged, hungry Italians came trudging down Highway 6 and along the railroad from the direction of the German line. Apparently, shelled and bombed out of their homes in St. Vittore or else returning to a mass of

rubble in Mignano, which they formally called home. Old men and women, children of all ages and girls of eighteen, who look more like thirty, because of the ragged clothes, the long unkempt hair and that thin hungry look. A few are wearing American clothes such as shoes, trousers and fatigue jackets. Where did they get them? Maybe they were given to them or maybe they got them from some soldier, who didn't need them anymore.

Don Redman and I took a walk down to Baker Battery of the 937th F.A. Battalion to see Walt Danielson. He was gone on a little excursion of his own, and as we stood and talked to his Executive Officer, we noticed a plane (A-36) diving in a gentle glide toward us. Then we saw smoke and knew the plane was headed for the ground. It was one of those things we had expected to see sooner or later. A second later someone looked up and saw a parachute floating down. That made us all feel better, especially when he waved, as he neared the ground. He was a blonde-headed Captain of about twenty-five. He said he stuck with it until he saw the big curve in Highway 6, then he stopped praying and bailed out, for he knew he was back in friendly territory.

January 14, 1944

Everyone called him Joe. He apparently owned this shell scarred house, which we call our Command Post. He was a very friendly man of middle age with two gold teeth and a ready smile. Like all Italians he talked with his hands. For the benefit of us he made fun of the Italian soldiers, who fought in the battle for Mt. Lungo. He picked up American cuss words very quickly, because they made us laugh. These he used fluently when the Italians came streaming through our gun positions after taking a terrible beating. Joe did his part by cutting wood, hair and whiskers. On one occasion he loaded down his horse with a radio and other supplies, and took them to our Observation Post, a four hour march over a slippery mountain trail. He was getting to be quite a handy man, then he disappeared. Reported killed when he attempted to cross the line with his horses.

January 20, 1944

Moved to a position north of Mt. Portio on January 17th. The area was thick with mines and evidence of the enemy. A few of his dead were still in the area. A stones throw to our rear is a battery of 155 mm long toms, which drew plenty of fire that first night. While I was on duty in fire direction they started throwing some at us. Captain Andersen and Lt. Douglas got chased out of their upstairs room by shells whistling by the window. They decided it was safer in the ground and dug in the next day.

In one position we had time to build a toilet out of ammunition crates and pitch a tent over it. What luxury! Major Sweeney was about to use it one night, when some big shells came in. He decided to wait. The next morning in the spot, where our toilet should have been, there was a crater left by a 170 mm shell. Sweeney was glad he waited. From our Command Post we are able to observe some of the battle zone, although smoke and fog, better known as "battle haze" makes observation difficult.

January 22, 1944

Don Redman and I slipped back to the rear today in a jeep to



have some dental work done. On the way we passed through St. Vittore and near St. Pictro, two of the most desolated and crumbled towns I ever expect to see. More pitiful than the town itself are the people, who move back in as soon as the front lines push on a few miles. We passed women and children, old and young. The women carried a bundle of clothes or some other precious article, while the children plodded along with the old family hen under one arm.

Everyone talked about the landing this side of Rome. We were all cheered because our own attack, across the Rapido River, was meeting very stiff resistance. The 143rd Infantry of the 36th Division made a successful crossing, but the 141st had to withdraw.

Sixty days in combat seems to have done something to us here in the front lines, as far as being shelled is concerned. Brigade, which we consider the rear area, was quite upset over some shells, which had landed within a few hundred yards of the area. We take them as a matter of course in our area and think nothing of it anymore. Another piece of gossip, which I picked up today, was one on the Commanding General of the 18th Brigade, who has been with us for the past fifteen months. He lives in a portable trailer, which is quite an elaborate affair, with cabinets, bed, lights and other luxuries. He complained one morning that the trailer was not quite level. The Brigade Executive took it upon himself to have the General's trailer fixed. Unable to find a level, the Colonel used the next best method and poured water on the floor to see which way it would run. What is this war coming to?

January 24, 1944

While we are eagerly awaiting information of the amphibious landing, our own forces are sending patrols across the Rapido River, and an attack is pending.

The other day while our observer was looking through a B-C Tele-scope, the observer from the 937th Battalion called out "line of sight", which is a polite way of saying, "Get out of the way". Both observers looked up to see a German directly in front of them. They grabbed for their pistols, but had left them in the sleeping cave. Rocks were the next best thing, but the German was in no fighting mood. He threw up his hands and called "comrade". He had been left behind and finally gave up.

January 26, 1944

If there can be a humane incident in warfare, we had one yesterday. During the attempted crossing of the Rapido River, casualties ran very high on both sides. On the afternoon of the second day, a captured American medic was released by the Germans with a note proposing a truce, while each side picked up the dead and wounded. The American High Command thought it was a trick, but agreed some time later. All guns became silent. Aid men went out from both sides to gather up the pieces. Americans carried Germans, as well as their own casualties and visa versa. Sometimes a stretcher would be carried by one American and one German.

January 28, 1944

We were paid a visit today by the higher-ups. We watch the air for enemy planes, listen for whistling enemy shells, inspect the ground for mines before we take a step. However, the threat which

keeps everyone on the alert is the signal, "The General is Coming". If our air-raid alarm system worked as well for enemy planes as it does for friendly Generals, it would be marvelous. Shoes shine, everyone is clean, shaved and alert. Scraps are picked up and even the projectiles shine on the loading tray.

January 30, 1944

Twice we have moved into a position before the infantry had moved on. In this position are a lot of shells, hand grenades, canteens and guns, including rifles, machine guns and artillery which did belong to the enemy. We have all been properly warned about fooling around such things. We were shown the training film, "Curiosity Killed the Cat" before we left the States. In spite of this, a certain Sergeant Major, a Captain, commanding headquarters battery, and the assistant S-3 (that's me) started out to inspect a camouflaged piece of material. We were afraid of mines so didn't go close. Later we got up enough nerve to look at some German dugouts, which are well prepared and quite elaborately built. Several, which we saw, were ten feet square with built-in bunks, chairs, tables and numerous other inventions. Some were deep enough to allow men to stand up very comfortably. On top of the dugout were eight inch planks, a layer of thinner planks and two feet of earth, followed by more plank and more earth making a four or five foot covering - practically impervious to shell fire. A few trip wires hanging on the doors made the place a bit uninviting and unwelcome looking. The more we looked the braver we became, until we ran across a funnel shaped piece on a triangular base. Not caring to touch it the Sergeant stood back and threw rocks at it. As he was not having much luck, I picked up a rock and tipped it over on the first shot. Nothing happened so the Sergeant decided to unscrew the cap, but had difficulty as the threads had been battered. After a struggle it came off and there was a detonator placed in a charge of TNT. We found later it was an anti-tank mine, magnetized to stick on the tank. Dumb! Dumb!

February 1, 1944

This has been a cool, damp, cloudy day so we tried to warm things up on the other side of the Rapido River. They also sent back a few. The war seems to be settling down to a mere routine. We sleep, eat and shoot - then shoot and eat. I came on duty this morning at 0500 and expect to get off at midnight with no overtime pay. Money is no good here anyhow, for I have spent \$2.80 during December and January for a few Post Exchange items and a couple of haircuts.

Total rounds expended during the month of January by our battalion was fifteen thousand, seven hundred and three. Each consists of ninety-five pounds of steel and TNT, which is effective for a radius of thirty-five yards and capable of killing a man at one hundred yards.

February 5, 1944

Yesterday we came under a new management. The Eighteenth F.A. Brigade followed the interference around left end and are to be landed on the new beachhead. We are now attached to the 77th F.A. Regiment.

Don Redman and I had quite a time shooting at vehicles on Highway 6. He was observing and I was conducting fire in Fire Direction Center. First we adjusted on a cross road. Don then calculated the time it would take for the vehicles to reach that point. We fired one battery at 4-second intervals. The best we could do was put bursts between two vehicles. It was great sport, if one forgets certain basic principles of humanity.

February 9, 1944

For sixty-five days I have studied maps and photos, plotted targets, measured ranges and calculated data to hit those targets. We must correct for drift, wind, air temperature, density, powder temperature and weight of projectile. Today I went to the Observation Post, where the effect of those several thousand rounds could be observed. From this observation post, called Mt. Trocchio, one can look for some twenty or thirty miles up the Liri Valley and almost as far behind us where the struggle has been going on for four months. At the base of a small mountain, cuddled up between the swift, winding Rapido River and Monastery Hill is the town of Cassino. A desolate mass of ruins. Houses and all construction have felt the impact of war. The railroad has been ripped up and all bridges have been destroyed, both on the highway and on the railroad. This is standard operating procedure for Jerry (the enemy).

They have a weapon referred to by many names; i.e. screaming meemie, rocket guns, 6-barrelled mortars and nccco-wafers, but officially called a nebelwerfer. It is a six-barrelled, six inch howitzer like gun, which fires a self propelled projectile in a manner similar to the U.S. Bazooka. It carries a considerable whallop, but leaves a tell tale mark of fire and smoke as it leaves the tube and screams on its way. One of my first missions was on two of these nebelwerfers. In fire for effect one round apparently landed in a pile of ammunition, for rounds began streaking off in all directions.

February 16, 1944

After seventy-eight days of continuous combat, Major Douglas, Capt. Fogel and myself were given a three-day rest period in Sorrento. It was a fashionable resort and tourist center before the war. It is a strangely pleasant feeling to sleep in a bed with a pillow, eat from a table and soak in a bathtub. These luxuries, without that accompaniment of shell fire, seem strange, but very nice. Our room was comfortable and clean in the private home of a Padre. He, his sister and niece went all out in their effort to make our stay enjoyable. The first day we had an excellent meal in a restaurant, took a bath, listened to the radio and slept until 9 o'clock the next morning. That, in itself, was worth a month's pay. On the second day we did a bit of shopping, looking at all the expensive linen, laces and gowns in Sorrento. The dance at the hotel on Saturday night was a gala event held in the Victoria Albergo Hotel. There were British officers, British nurses, Scottish officers in their plaid skirts, Canadians and U.S. officers, both male and female.

February 27, 1944

Our battalion left the front line, near Cassino, on Feb. 19,



after being in combat continuously for eighty-nine days. We dropped back for reorganization and general repair. The reorganization meant the loss of our antitank section and a total of eighty-five men. Vehicles, guns and all equipment were completely checked over and either repaired or replaced.

This, being a good chance to relax a bit, I strolled away from camp with an axe over my shoulder. We had a tent set up with a very hungry stove, a radio, cots and a table for business and bridge. I chopped down a tree and got warmer from hacking at it than we did from burning it. Our camp was on the east bank of the Volturno River, opposite Venafro and up against a hill. It was a peaceful little valley, where the natives were trying to get some crops started and where small boys herded cattle, sheep and goats on the mountain side. One or two hours before mealtime we had a bucket parade. Children of all ages and a few adults, fifty strong, came for the leftovers at the kitchen. At first, the mess sergeant tried to dish it out in an orderly manner, but gave up. It was like trying to line up 50 weanling pigs and they looked that way when it was over. A fighting, screaming pack, splattered with hash and oatmeal.

Lt. Faulkner, my former roommate, and I sauntered up the side of a mountain one day, just to breathe air free from smoke, dust and shells. It was nice to walk on ground without wondering if there was a mine underfoot. Early in the battle for Mt. Camino, he had gone with the Infantry up that rugged peak as a forward observer. They had lived in rain, snow and cold for several days, drinking muddy water from shell holes and sharing a ration with three or four other men. A handful of doughboys were garrisoning a forward ridge where Faulkner was acting as a forward observer. During the night they were attacked and cut-off, leaving them in an embarrassing situation. They finally crawled out leaving some of their equipment, including helmets. They were afraid they would make a noise against the rocks. A day or so later, he saw the Jerries forming for a counter attack. After studying his map he sent us the coordinates. A few minutes later shells were bursting among the screaming, yelling Germans. One hundred rounds or more did the job. He told me these events in his slow, honest Texas style. He was always a very hard working, modest guy, who I am proud to know.

March 4, 1944

Exactly two weeks after leaving the front, the battalion was on its way back over the same mountain trail leading from Venafro to Cervaro and St. Vittore. Our position, this time, is in the vicinity of St. Michele. From our Command Post we can almost spit on Cassino, and the ruins of the Monastery above it. The firing batteries were placed in ravines to give them some protection against enemy observation and shell fire. We are working with the French, Indians, British and New Zealanders. If we fire south of a certain grid line, we charge it to the New Zealanders. Anything north of that line is charged to the French. We hear stories of the quiet way these Indians slip up and snip off a man's head with a knife or a piece of wire. Some have long black full beards, black beady eyes and hair bound up in a turban. They look strange driving an American jeep.

The spring rains have begun just as the winter rains stopped. Now and then we see a touch of beauty, which has escaped the shells

and hell of war. There is a fruit tree near by, full of bloom. A clear little stream is running over pure white pebbles, and the grass is coming up through the blackened ground. Now and then we get a taste of sunny Italy, the rest of the time it is rain, rain, rain. Today is nice, however, and we hope it will stay that way.

March 14, 1944

For several days we have been ready for an offensive. The rain either held it up or the Air Corps was not ready. Today we had a look at the battery positions. One battery is dug in on the reverse slope of a hill with plenty of protection. Along side the Executive's dugout is a little dugout for the battery hen. Yes, I mean a real chicken hen that lays eggs with shells. We get those kind of eggs on New Years and Christmas. She was salvaged from the battle-field and has been producing as any good hen should produce.

March 17, 1944

About 0830, March 15, the planes started to bomb Cassino. The first wave dropped bombs a little short, but we didn't mind. The third wave was one mile short and we did mind. Two sticks of bombs hit in our position, leaving craters big enough to bury a prime mover. We had crawled up on a roof to get a better view. When we saw the bombs coming down, it didn't take us long to get off the roof. These, of course, were our own planes and they caused more casualties than we have had for sometime. One of those unfortunate mistakes. They continued a four hour plastering of Cassino and the vicinity. Waves of mediums B25's and B26's started and flying forts and liberators left the place a smoking ruins. At 1200 hours the Artillery opened up. We fired over 1000 rounds in two hours and twenty-five minutes. At the end of this period, we could see tanks firing into the ruins. We shifted our fire to the southern part of Cassino and our tanks went in from the north, according to plan. They found the streets so littered with rubble they could not get through. Thirty-six prisoners were taken through our area. How they could be alive, I do not know.

On the morning of the 16th, smoke pots filled the air with a dense cloud to screen the activities of the engineers. Bridges were built across the Rapido River. In the afternoon another of those "mistakes" occurred. We were plastered by our own Air Corps. This time six mediums dropped 25 pound fragmentation bombs, causing at least 40 casualties, with 7 killed. The New Zealanders, Indians, Italians and a few Americans are a bit disgusted with the Air Corps. They must have had a wild party the night before. The Colonel suggests calling a truce with the bombardiers while we bury the dead. The battle for Cassino continues, but we have a report that all resistance was broken at 2200 hours March 16. The scrap for the Abbey continues after we plastered it with artillery and smoked it continuously all day with white phosphorus. It was already in ruins from previous air attacks, but may have been used, by the enemy, for observation.

March 19, 1944

On this, the fourth day of the attack, Jerry machine guns are still rattling on Monastery hill. Outside the pack mules are shuffling along the gravel road, while an occasional flare lights up

Cassino. It is now 0540. At 0550 we will fire 360 rounds in twenty minutes on hill 468. This will be known as "Revenge barrage" for on this hill many American men lost their lives, when the 142nd Infantry attacked some time ago.

April 4, 1944

Our guns are coming into position tonight in the vicinity of Castrese, a little village a few miles from the coast, in what was formerly the tenth Corps front. We left the Cassino area on March 28th after the push failed. The Indians and New Zealanders succeeded in clearing part of the town and captured several heights. Some of our troops were cut off and had to be supplied by parachute from P51's. Green smoke would suddenly appear on Hangman's hill. A flight of Mustangs would then come in low and drop their cargo in the smoke. Between positions we spent almost a week in a bivovac area where Route 6 meets Route 7. Route 7 is the coast road to Rome. I'm wondering, tonight, if it will be any easier.

April 6, 1944

Our outpost are out tonight with their carbines loaded and they are ready to fire at the slightest movement. If he sticks his head out one more time, there will be one less rat over here, and I don't mean Hitler. It is a four-legged creature that has been running around in this cave, which we are using for a fire direction center. He was baited with a slice of bread, which he took, so they are now waiting for him to come after the second piece.

I was down visiting "Charlie" Battery today. The battery Commander said, "There goes a walking foxhole". It was an Italian boy, who had spent the day digging holes and dugouts for the men. Captain MacDougal and I gave a couple of boys a quarter each to cut wood and put a stove in our cave.

April 8, 1944

Last evening I sat in the window sill of our dining room and watched the natives as they walk up and down the street. The women carry water in a large flask on top of their head. Firewood, laundry and other articles are carried the same way in a basket. A woman without a load on her head is unusual. One woman had a little white lamb under one arm and was leading a couple of ewes. Another was following a black, hairless pig with a rope tied to its front leg. The pig was picking up scraps as it meandered along the narrow street.

April 11, 1944

Our front is fairly quiet these days, although on the night of April 8-9, we fired on fifteen tanks. The night was moonlight enough to allow our observation plane to go up. The target and results were reported by the 88th division. One tipped over and one set on fire. We also fired on some self-propelled guns that had come down the highway.

Lt. Cofer returned from the Observation Post after having had a close encounter with enemy mortars. He apparently stuck his head out of his foxhole and nearly lost it.

On Easter morning we shaved, shined our boots and went to church. Services were held in an open area along one of the narrow streets here in the village of Castrese. Gathered there on the steps and

stone wall and with their steel helmets on were seated about one-hundred American men and officers. On the other side of the twelve foot wide street were a handful of natives. The opening hymn was a signal for the rest of the villagers and they were soon coming from all directions. They brought their babies, sheep, swine and donkeys with them. I could imagine gatherings during the time of Christ as being quite similar.

April 16, 1944

During this extended lull in activity, we have had frequent visitors to see if we have maintained our efficiency as an artillery battalion. I think we have, but there is always that need to be pushed by someone, so that our army will do its best instead of just enough to get by. After receiving somewhat of a jacking-up, a certain gun section was ready the next time. The men were all shaved and clean, the projectiles were clean, oiled and piled in neat rows. The net, sandbags and tools were nicely arranged and the gun pit was swept. All this was fine, but the Colonel thought they carried it too far by putting a bouquet of flowers on each gun trail, even though it was close to Easter.

April 25, 1944

The lull continues and we are restricted to one-hundred rounds per day. Instead of firing a few rounds now and then, we would rather fire until the tubes really get hot. Everyone wants to go home. We are convinced, after Cassino, that there has to be plenty of dough-boys to go in and root them out.

I am working the midnight shift now, so usually sleep through breakfast. I get up at eleven o'clock and clean up in time for dinner. There are no beards or dirty faces in this battalion, or at least not for long. Back in the days of mud, rain and cold winter nights, we could get away without shaving every day. No one bothered to visit us then, but now that there isn't much fighting, we have to look and act like soldiers.

May 1, 1944

Yesterday I spent an hour and a half cruising above the lines in one of our "Maytag Messerschmidts". (Better known as an observation plane.) It is a cracker-box, two seated affair capable of making one-hundred sixty miles per hour in a power dive. The Jerries have considerable respect for its armament, which sometimes consists of 48 4.5 inch guns, 72 105mm howitzers and twelve 240mm howitzers. Also known as the II Corps Artillery. Jerry does what he can to destroy the little defenseless thing. He pops at it with 88's, bombs and shells the airstrip and sends up ME109 fighters to shoot it down. The sea and landscape were very pretty. I could see a motor boat scimming up the Garigliano River and smoke pots were burning to hide our bridges.

We were inspected again by General Keyes, II Corps Commander, Colonel Jay, II Corps Artillery Commander, and Colonel Schmidt, 77th Group Commander.

May 5, 1944

Service battery rigged up a shower unit, which is passed around the battalion. Today was our day, so I am as clean as a

whistle tonight. Ocean Carnes clipped my hair, which is pretty short these days. The barber has his shop in a deep ditch. It is lined with small yellow flowers and red roses threaded on a string. Little girls bring them to exchange for a roll of life savers. He has also become attached to a cute little four year old boy. Yesterday we heard a terrible scream and found him trying to give the little guy a bath. He was howling, kicking and generally acting up. Some of these people have volunteered to take a bath after the war. I do think they need one before that.

Italians are really packed together in these little villages. The streets are barely wide enough for a truck to get through. With the children, pigs, donkeys and women with bottles of water on their head, you can imagine what a traffic problem we have. In some places it is necessary to have a military policeman at each end of the village with a telephone line between. Traffic flows in one direction awhile, then the other. From the street there is very little difference between a residence, a drug store, or a shoe repair shop, but chances are good it will be a wine distributor. One can walk along the street, provided there is no traffic, and have half-a-dozen children on his heels. They all want caramella (candy), but don't beg so vigorously as Arabs.

It is hard to distinguish between one house and another, since they are built right against each other. Some are apartments that house as many as one-hundred. Each house and most rooms have a balcony. They remind me of the four by four foot pens we had in front of the brooder house to give the chickens some air. These balconies are used to chat with a neighbor across the street, air the bed clothes and provide a place for the family hen to lay an egg.

May 11, 1944

Colonel Kennedy called a meeting of all staff officers and Battery Commanders at 1500 hours. We had been expecting a large scale attack on the enemy for some time. When the Colonel made sure the door was closed and nobody outside in the hall, we knew this was it! To start the meeting and get everyone in the right frame of mind, Major Douglas read the following message from General H.R. Alexander, Commander-in-Chief, Allied Armies in Italy.

"Soldiers of the Allied Armies in Italy."

"Throughout the past winter you have fought hard and valiantly and killed many Germans. Perhaps you are disappointed that we have been unable to advance faster and farther, but I and those who ought to know, realize full well how magnificently you have fought amongst these almost unsurmountable obstacles of rocky, trackless mountains, deep in snow, and in valleys blocked by rivers and mud against a stubborn foe.

The results of these past months may not appear spectacular, but you have drawn into Italy and mauled many of the enemies best divisions, which he badly needed to stem the advance of the Russian armies in the East.

Hilter has admitted that his defeats in the east were largely due to the bitterness of the fighting and his losses in Italy. This, in itself, is a great achievement and you may well be proud of yourselves as I am of you. You have gained the admiration of the world and the gratitude of our Russian Allies.

Today the bad times are behind us and tomorrow we can see

victory ahead. Under the ever increasing blows of the air forces of the United States and United Nations, which are mounting every day in intensity. The German war machine is beginning to crumble. The Allied armed forces are now assembling for the final battles on sea, on land and in the air to crush the enemy once and for all. From the East and the West, from the North and the South, blows are about to fall, which will result in the final destruction of the Nazis and bring freedom once again to Europe, and hasten peace for us all. To us in Italy has been given the honor to strike the first blow.

We are going to destroy the German army in Italy. The fighting will be hard, bitter, and perhaps long, but you are soldiers and warriors of the highest order, who for more than a year have known only victory. You have courage, determination and skill. You will be supported by overwhelming air forces, and in guns and tanks we far out-number the Germans. No armies have entered combat before with a more just and righteous cause.

So with God's help and blessing, we take the field - Confident of Victory."

Along with this statement was one by General Clark. The S2 explained the situation and the S3 covered the plan of fire. The Colonel gave a few last minute instructions, asked if there were any questions and announced H-hour, which was to be kept secret until just before the attack. I then went to the cave in which we had our fire-direction center. We made the latest corrections in our firing data and held a rehearsal among the computers for the arranged firing.

At exactly 2300 hours we opened up, along with all the other artillery in the Fifth Army. In the next 25 hours our twelve guns fired 2833 rounds (140 tons) on enemy guns and strong points. It was the greatest display of fireworks since the attack on Mt. Camino last December, and on a much wider front.

May 15, 1944, Lorenzo

Shortly after midnight on May 14, we moved to a new position across the Garigliano River. The Colonel and Major had a room in a deserted house at the end of a narrow alley, which was lined by a stone wall on one side and a row of fragrant roses on the other. Early in the evening, Capt. MacDougal and I drove a jeep down this narrow roadway to check over plans with the Colonel. About 9:30 P.M. we decided to go back to fire direction and get some rest. It was a very dark night and we were feeling our way along without lights in the jeep. Suddenly the horizon began to light up and we could hear planes overhead. A flare overhead lit up the road and landscape as brightly as day. It was our first night air raid, but we didn't stay long in one place to see what it was like. Mac stuck his foot in the carburetor and we were soon back at fire direction, which was in the lower room of a stone house. By this time planes were circling and dropping more flares. We just knew they were trying to get a bead on that little stone house, however the bombs whistled down and not one hit the house. The planes circled for perhaps thirty minutes, diving and releasing anti-personnel and fragmentation bombs. Then a stick of bombs landed quite close, each one just a little closer. We were relieved when the plane passed on over after running out of bombs. The damage was limited to an ammunition dump on fire and three or four casualties in the vicinity. One medic from the 88th Division was partly buried, but suffered only a broken leg.



May 17, 1944

Our next position was in the vicinity of Triminsuoli. Capt. Andersen and I went forward to find a command post and help with the survey. We were shelled as we crossed the Carigliano River and again as we passed through Minturno. Big shells whizzed overhead and crashed into the town.

May 18, 1944

Moved again to a position southwest of Castellorauto after firing six-hundred rounds during the last twenty-four hours. The Column was harassed somewhat along Highway 7 and after going into position. (A few casualties.)

May 21, 1944

As we moved up Highway 7 toward Rome, we could see the results of the tremendous amount of firing we had done. Formia was battered, as most Italian towns have been. It lies at the base of a mountain and close to the sea. It had taken a beating from land, sea and air. Between Formia and Itri, the Germans had done a hurry-up job of road destruction. Most bridges had been destroyed, so that by-passes were necessary. Two days before, we had fired on a curve in the highway during the night. We were delighted to see an overturned 170mm enemy gun at that point - whether we did it or not. Also along the way were numerous tanks, vehicles and horses not in a fighting condition. We made a rapid occupation of a position two miles east of Fondi and were ready to fire in a few minutes. By this time Fondi was ours and mopping up operations were taking place to the north and west.

May 22, 1944

News from the forward elements was scarce, and the front lines were indefinite. Our front had changed considerable in the last few days and we were on our way to Rome. Captain King, our Intelligence Officer, and I decided to go up front to see what was going on. A couple of men also wanted to go, so we hopped in a jeep and took off. We followed another jeep up Highway #7 through an infantry column until we began to see them slipping along in the ditches and staying very low. At this point, we met Generals Clark and Keyes headed for the rear. A few hundred yards down the road the jeep ahead of us stopped to inquire at an infantry outpost. We eased up to hear the conversation. Colonel Van Kahn, of the 631 Field Artillery Battalion, was trying to find a point in enemy territory to register his battalion. Rifle and mortar fire gave us the impression that we were almost far enough. I think we were all relieved when Capt. King pulled up to an unpassable bridge, left that way by the retreating Jerries. We found an Infantry Lieutenant who gave us the situation. To our right rear, a thousand yards away, our patrols had made contact with a company of Jerries hiding in the rocks. To our left was Saint Biagio, which had been surrounded by our dough boys, but snipers and machine guns were still giving us trouble. This little village, snuggled on the side of a hill, was banked on the downward side by a great stone wall. Lining the rail of this wall, overlooking the valley below, were about one-hundred Italians. They seemed to be enjoying the show until our tanks fired on a strong point fifty yards below them. They scurried for cover and the rail was bare. Further to the right was another

little scrap. We could see mortars firing and rifle and machine gun bullets glancing off the rocks. This was all very interesting, until we heard a bullet whiz through the trees over our heads. I found myself at the bottom of a ditch, scratched with thorns, one boot full of water, and grinning at Sergeant Engels, who was in the same shape.

A few minutes later an engineers truck rolled up with a culvert to replace the blown bridge. Directly behind was a bulldozer and a dozen men. Shortly after, we made a voluntary withdrawal. On the way back, we passed through a fresh batch of prisoners, who we had seen being rounded up.

May 29, 1944

During the past week, we have been on the jump. We occupied a firing position between Fondi and Terricina, a bivovac area at the end of the tunnel, eight miles north of Terricina, a firing position two miles west of Priverno, and a firing position below Sezza. In all of these positions, firing has been light and movement difficult due to the immense amount of traffic and the excellent job of destruction by the Germans. Between Minturno and Terracina, a distance of fifty miles are a considerable number of bridges and grades. When a five-foot span was missed, Jerry must have slipped up. When a fifty-foot bridge was left intact, an engineering officer was probably shot. As far as I could tell, the enemy should not have suffered any casualties from that mistake. Railroads were destroyed in a similar manner. All bridges were blasted, rails were cut every twenty-five feet with an explosive, and ties were ripped in the center with a machine.

On the morning of the 25th, the Colonel called a meeting of all the Battalion Officers. He implied that we were in for a surprise. That we were, for when that meeting was over, eight officers found themselves with a new job. I knew it was coming, for my tent was close enough for me to hear he and Major Douglas discussing the situation past midnight. Earlier that day, "A" battery had failed to clear the crest in front of them. The rounds landed fairly close to II Corps headquarters and, in a few seconds, the phone was ringing off the hook. "A" battery Commander was relieved and I was placed in command. The men threw their helmets in the air and seemed happy with the change. It was not because of me, for they hardly knew me. They just wanted a change. It was a big change for them and for me. Suddenly I was responsible for the safety and welfare of more than one-hundred men. I shuddered to think that my mistakes could now cost somebody his life. I thought I knew at least part of the problem. The First Sergeant called a meeting of all the men. I found myself trying to explain how we were going to function from now on. There was an excellent set of officers, who I could depend on. The men had been doing their job in combat for seven months, and had been trained for two years. I remember telling them "You should know how to do your job by now. I will sign the morning report and pick out new gun positions. You do your job and I will do mine."

June 3, 1944

The battalion moved each day during the past week, going into a position near Guillinanello, another a few miles north, and one near Labico. Yesterday our battery fired on a column of tanks.

June 4, 1944

Our Column hit Highway 6 a few miles west of Valmentone, after fighting past Velletri. We drove fast along the highway for 10 miles, finally going into position 5 miles from Rome near an airfield.

June 5, 1944

At 0400 we were in the middle of Rome with our 155mm howitzers. Earlier, the Colonel and Battery reconnaissance cars from each battery had become separated. We were driving with black-out lights. Suddenly the two red slits in front of us disappeared and we were lost. We knew we were in Rome, but Rome is a very big town. By radio, we were all able to find our way back to the Colliseum. We started over and managed to stay a little closer together. It was a moonlit night, but a low fog made it hard to see. When daylight came, we were a little relieved, even though a few snipers were still hanging around. At daylight, much to our delight, there was cheering and applause all along the street. When we finally stopped, the cheering turned to hugs and kisses - a little compensation for the past seven months. There must have been hundreds of Romans surrounding our men. Some were invited for breakfast and there was no way to keep track of everyone. When the Colonel saw what was happening, he ordered us to move into a firing position. The only available spots were the race track and fair grounds. My battery was lined up in the center of the race track, and I watched them fire from the bleachers. We were supposed to cross the Tiber River, but all bridges were blocked by our tanks.

June 6, 1944

Two and one-half miles northeast of Rome. My Recon. party found a Mulberry tree, and we heard about the invasion of France.

June 7, 1944

One mile northeast of Farnese. We went into position, but did not fire. No targets.

June 8, 1944

Moved to a new bivovac area, one mile north of Olquito. Our mission is care and repair of equipment and material (also personnel).

June 10, 1944

Went back to Rome. Words cannot describe Saint Peters Church. It is one of those constructions, which seems impossible for the human mind and hand to build, without some devine help from above.

The old Roman Coliseum is another of those wonders built by twenty thousand slaves, in four years, before the time of Christ. Part of it has been reconstructed of the same material and in the same manner as the original. The floor of the arena has crumbled away, but below it are the walls of the rooms in which actors and actresses put on the stage paint.

June 15, 1944

Very few days have passed without the battalion moving at some time during the day or night. Today we are in position along the Alberno River. Half an hour after hitting the position our guns were ready to fire, and the men were in the clear, cool, stream swimming. We had been hoping for this for many days. Because our

firing was light, we had a wonderful chance to enjoy it. During the day the cooks decided they could make good use of some of the fish, which seemed to be plentiful in the stream. A couple of fish hooks, plus a little explosion, did the job and we all had fish for supper. Before we could sit down and enjoy it, a call came for forward parties, so we had to grab a fish and eat it on the run.

June 16, 1944

Our location today is five miles east of Grossetto. I took an observation party out to see if we could register the battalion. We watched the doughboys streaming over the low hills and into the valley beyond. They were drawing fire from enemy guns back in the hills. We could not locate the guns accurately because of their defiladed positions. This evening the Long Toms passed us so we look forward to moving again. We are still firing on tanks and enemy guns.

An Italian family gave us food today - one of the wonders of the war, for they are usually starving. The menu consisted of fresh fried potatoes, roast pork, spaghetti, noodle soup, cheese, and a five gallon jug of wine - served in the field and delivered to all gun sections.

June 19, 1944

Two more firing positions. One a mile east of Grossetto and another two miles north. We are now attached to the 1st Armoured Division for a drive northward toward Florence.

June 20, 1944

Our battery became attached to a battalion of self-propelled 105mm guns of the 93rd A.F.A. Battalion. We were called task force "Able". The battalion assigned us Captain Faulkner and Lieutenant Liss to help in fire direction. We were on our own and could not depend on Battalion headquarters for anything. Our mission was to give the armoured force some heavier fire power. The question was, could we keep up in a fast moving situation. The procedure was to get one gun into a position as quickly as possible, register, and then bring up the remainder of the battery. By that time I would be out looking for a new position. On one occasion, our forward party found one of our tanks blown up in the middle of the road. We turned around and took another road, only to find the same thing. Our new experience was suddenly becoming a nightmare, but it was to get worse. We started out about midnight to move into a new position. By the time we were ready to fire, the Tank Force Commander radioed that we were too far back. We moved up closer, but still could not help much. By the time we got into the third position, it was daylight of the second day. Everyone was dog tired and sleepy. One man decided enough was enough and decided to end it all. Sergeant Carnes came and asked if I would talk to him. We found him in his tent with a bullet wound in his right temple and an ugly bulge over his left eye. By some miracle he was still alive and conscious. His first words were, "Get away, I want to die." We loaded him in an ambulance and sent him to the hospital. More trouble back at Fire Direction. One of the battalion officers was there wondering why we were not ready to fire. He jumped on me for taking care of the casualty instead of getting the firing started. He out-ranked me so, of course, he was right. My Mother told me there would be days like this - If I could only see her now.

June 26, 1944

Yesterday, Sergeant Turruntime, my driver, and I drove up to a house looking for a new gun position. The family all came out, hugged and kissed us. Later they brought out wine and eggs. We were, apparently, the first Americans they had seen.

It was about this time that I heard the boys calling themselves the "Liberators". They liberated some small articles like spoons and chickens, which did not bother me too much. One day, however, after a tank had blasted a hole in a rather nice house, I learned they had helped themselves to a lot of the fine linen, silverware and other small items. I know I was not popular that day, after the First Sergeant and I checked their baggage and made them return all of the items we could find.

July 4, 1944

Fired Battalion four volleys, one round for each state. The weather is dry and hot. Each time a gun fires, or a vehicle goes by, a great cloud of dust blots out the battery.

July 5, 1944

Pvt. Carmack tripped over a strand of wire connected to an "S" mine. The mine bounced out of the ground, exploded, and struck him in the back, leg and left arm. With blood gushing from his arm, he managed to stagger out of the mine field without setting off more. The explosion had attracted Sergeant Coburn's attention, and he arrived in time to stop the bleeding after Carmack passed out. It was tricky business getting him back on the road in the ambulance, as we could see other mines in the stream bed where he had been washing.

Earlier in the day, the Battalion reconnaissance party was plastered with light artillery, as we were looking for a position. Captain Faulkner had said, "Colonel, Sir, when we go over that next hill they can see us." He didn't get the Colonel's attention, but when three rounds went off, directly over head - that did. We all bailed out and took cover. Between volleys, we crawled through the brush and thorns in the direction of a little stone house. Sgt. Byrd and Lt. Hanna ran to a larger house farther away. I crawled into the little house and found two walls still standing. After thirty minutes, there was a lull and we tried to get back to our vehicles. They popped at us again with three "88"mm guns. We finally were able to get the jeeps out one at a time. Somehow we came out of that with only thorns and scratches. The vehicles were not so lucky.

Our position tonight is a few hundred yards east of Elsa, which changed hands four times before we got it permanently (I hope). There seems to be quite a scrap just over the hill.

July 10, 1944

The 1st Sergeant and a few of the men are playing dominos under a tree, while in the distance we hear a German gun go off. A few seconds later the shell explodes near a cross road in front of us. Our position is 5 or 6 miles due west of Volterra, which is being cleaned of snipers. We found mines in the grape vineyards, potato patches and cornfields. The potatoes were good fried, and the corn is in the roasting ear stage. Wheat shocks are also booby trapped.

Terry correctly calculated that men would use the straw to sleep on. The dirty rats! This is as bad as shooting holes in the wine barrels.

July 17, 1944

Again, during the week our position changed almost every day. We are now a mile south of Pecciola. Last night we fired on a counter attack and got a report that it was broken up. Our section of the line is two or three miles ahead of the French on the right and the 91st and 34th on the left. We are back with the 88th Division which helped drive into Rome. The Italians are very friendly and insisted on doing my laundry.

One of the men in the Battalion drifted off to try out his new Italian Berretta pistol. He fired it a few times and out stepped a German sergeant from a nearby house. He said, in fairly good English, "If you wait until the others get shaved and washed, we will go with you". In a few minutes ten clean, well dressed men came out of the house and gave themselves up.

July 23, 1944

We have been moving back and forth along the line supporting one sector and then another. It is the purpose of army artillery to support the division making the main effort, which is very reasonable. This being the case - the men and officers are becoming quite weary, after two months of steady pushing. The Colonel flew to 5th Army headquarters to see if he could get the battalion a rest. He was promised one in a few days. Rumors of a landing in Southern France are strong. The attempted slaying of Hitler and the confusion in Germany sounds good.

July 25, 1944

After spending the morning censoring a couple hundred letters, I should be able to write one of my own and have plenty of material left over. Some of them go like this: My dearest, sweetest, sugar punkin, how I do love you and wish I were with you today. We are still chasing Krauts all over Italy and are certainly giving the \*!+@+X! hell. I don't have time to write much, for we are moving so fast, but you know I love you more than any one else in the whole wide world:

Another man thinks a bum's life will be a snap when he gets back. He said he had slept in everything from a King's Palace to a manure pile. He wrote: "If civilization takes a turn for the worse, I will be prepared. If people start living in caves and holes again, I will feel right at home". After reading so many such letters, it is hard to write anything original.

We just finished dinner consisting of: beans, spaghetti, raisins, bread and water. Not so wonderful, but good enough. I think someone mentioned steak for supper, which happens two or three times a month. We get quite a lot of canned chicken, corned beef, and too much hash and stew. When the men have a chance, they boil an ear of corn or fry some fresh potatoes with an egg on the side.

I have noticed a new term in the battery lately. The German 88mm gun is well known for its high velocity and rate of fire. There is generally a short, sharp zip, followed by the explosion. This



doesn't give men a chance to get down. When a man gets quite nervous, jittery and runs for a hole at the slightest danger, he has the "88's". Possibly the only connection between the two is that the one caused the other to be that way.

August 10, 1944

On the last day of July, the Battalion pulled back a few miles for maintenance of guns and vehicles. During this period, men and officers were given three days rest in Rome. Six of us made connections with "Available Joe", an agent who did business in everything from real estate to cognac. He rented us a villa in the residential district and we thought we were all set. Later, however, some relatives of the agent came and wanted to live in the house. It seems the owner of the house was on the enemy side of the line and his relatives could not agree on who had control. We finally got the place for two nights.

We made an extended tour of the scenic spots of Rome and re-enacted our entry into the city on June 5th, by going to the east side and coming in again as we did that fateful night. Chaplain Arnold got us tickets to the Opera, "Carmen".

August 18, 1944

The battalion made a blackout drive from our rest area near Peccioli to Certaldo, a distance of forty miles. The trip was a grind over rough, narrow roads and the night was really black. This morning the men are preparing their beds as the threat of rain is growing into a sprinkle. The cold hard ground is made softer at the expense of a farmers wheat crop. He can gather up the bundles after we move on. The watermelons will be much harder to find. Some of the men offered me a big slice, as if to keep me quiet. I am a sucker for watermelon.

In a way I would not mind this trip of ours in Italy. Of course, the Chamber of Commerce is not on the ball, it is too far from home, and it is taking too darn long. I am sitting here in a Command car, looking across a little valley. On the other side, at the very top of the hill, is a group of farm buildings with some tall, dark pine trees surrounding them. The slope of the hill is covered with Olive trees and grape vines. Down below are patches of sweet corn and other garden crops. These people lead a simple life. They are hauling bundles of wheat on ox carts, with a boy or a woman trailing behind to apply the brakes with a rope. They beat out the grain with a flail, and make it into dark bread. These are baked in large outdoor ovens. Most of them have a few chickens, geese and other livestock. If it were not for the war, their troubles would be few.

The invasion of Southern France began on August 15th and seems to be going well.

August 25, 1944

The fortunes of war include taking the bitter with the sweet. Dame fortune smiled down on me and gave me a nice room in a modern house. The room is blessed with a table and two chairs, a closet and some pretty pictures. There is also a bath, which is getting good usage, from the colonel on down. The landlady and her son are Swiss born, English speaking people, who appear well off financially. The

other evening we were invited to sip wine and talk, on the roof garden, overlooking the Arno River and Florence.

September 4, 1944

We crossed the Arno River, drove through Florence and went into a position on the northeast side of the city. Somehow we felt better on the north side of the river. The Germans could no longer fire straight across the valley into our position from their prepared positions overlooking Florence.

September 15, 1944

This country, ten miles south of Futa Pass, is very much like parts of Colorado, with it's hills, trees, streams and pretty little valleys. The people at this particular position have a nice little ranch and raise fruit, alfalfa and livestock. Of course the Germans have helped themselves liberally to cattle, hogs and poultry. This is getting to be an old story.

My reconnaissance party were the first American troops in the area. After they decided we were really Americans, they were wild with joy. The foreman, a man old enough to be my father, removed his hat, bowed low, took me into the house and treated me as though I were a king. They insisted on me using their finest bedroom. They were sleeping in a cave nearby. Several of us enjoyed a hot meal that evening. So much better than cold "C" rations.

September 24, 1944

We are now in position, three thousand yards south of Futa Pass. Gun positions are at a premium in these mountains and we now have a formation, which Fort Sill may not have seen or would approve. Numbers one and three are firing directly over Numbers two and four with a battery front of sixty yards. The forward platoon is one-hundred and fifty yards ahead of the rear platoon.

We are literally on top of the world today, both mentally and physically. Again the Fifth Army has come through - the toughest defenses one can imagine. As we came into position yesterday afternoon, we saw samples of their minefields, barbed wire, tank traps, pill boxes and strong points. We are now in the middle of these defenses, but bombs, shells and doughboys have rendered them harmless. In the valley below is an anti-tank ditch, some ten feet wide and six feet deep, made in the form of a U, with poles standing on end in the back side of the ditch. From here I can see at least six prepared enemy gun positions on the back side of the hills. Some of these have been prepared with cement, and others with logs. Two of them have been knocked out with bombs. One, a direct hit, has thrown the gun fifty yards from the pit and smashed the emplacement. Artillery had sprinkled the entire area, making the hills and valley look like a giant inverted prairie dog town. Around the artillery positions are dug-outs, machine gun positions, and slit trenches lined with saplings. The Germans, apparently, intended to hold this - the famous Gothic Line.

We are fifteen miles or less from Bologna, and are at this moment witnessing a formation, which may smash its way on through. Last night a regiment of dough-boys bivovaced on the other side of the valley. Two hours ago, these men, along with others hauled up

in trucks, took off up through the winding road just short of the pass. Between the single file of foot soldiers on each side of the mountain road (No. 65), are passing a column of jeeps, tanks, tank destroyers, antitank guns, cannon companies and light artillery. We can see each element form and await their turn to pull out onto the crowded road. One can get a partial view of an army in action and on the move, and as they creep along the mountain road, the 240mm and our 155's are booming out for encouragement.

In a preparation last night, the battery fired seventy-seven rounds in ten minutes on five different targets - which is not bad in pitch darkness. Now a column of mules; sixty three by the first sergeants count, are ambling around a curve on the side of a mountain. They will be used where the jeep cannot go.

September 26, 1944

Yesterday we were not expecially enjoying the rain, when a terrific explosion split the air over our heads. Don Redman and I stuck our heads out of a small wall tent to see what it was. A moment later three air bursts made us quiver. Don suggested the rain was setting off shells from our own 155 guns, a battery of long toms behind us. I made a dash for the phone, and as I was calling to have the firing stopped, two more cracked, sending a fragment whining down into the mud, a few feet from where I was standing.

October 10, 1944

Back to mud rain, cold and gloomy weather - the kind that separates the men from the boys - especially when they must wrestle guns and ammunition in the worst of it. The Gothic Line has been broken, but not the weather. Today we are ten miles from Bologna, east of Highway 65. We hope to be there in a few days.

October 16, 1944

Everything is fine, including the weather, and the Lord seems to be smiling down on us for a few days. The men are still performing very well, but are very homesick. The thought of going to the Pacific doesn't help. Soldiers pick up every little rumor and play it up, expecially if it is not so cheerful. For instance, some are complaining about prisoners-of-war receiving high wages, marrying American girls and going on tours in the states. The ones who make the greatest fuss are the ones who have nothing else to do. You might be surprised to know that many counter attacks have been stopped by machine gunners, who have never been out of the rear echelon - according to letters home. Speaking of the treatment of prisoners, I did see this sign on a house near the front at Basano, "Cleaned and remodeled for P.W's"

Men spend alot of time joking and making cracks, which does help to break the monotony and tension. One day we had fired considerable ammunition for an attack, and the gun crews were tired and sluggish. Of course, the men always wonder how things are going for the doughboys, and our observation posts relay the information to the gun crews. Information of this particular attack was lacking and one cannoneer said, "Things must be going O.K. or else we would be firing some more". Another answered, "Either that or else we fired two thousand yards short, which would also explain the silence".

When the guns are spaced close enough for the men to talk back and forth, there is constantly a stream of cracks and razzing. Each crew tries to fire their rounds first and jeer the slow section or ask them if they have a new mission. Sometimes the two-man loading tray is tossed aside and one man shoves the 92# shells into the tube, as if they were 75's. At the following meal the chatter sounds like two ball clubs about to come to blows.

We were passing through a column of doughboys slowly the other day. One pointed to a road sign, which read "Highway 65". He picked up his chin and his feet and slopped along in the knee deep mud with this remark, "Oh boy! Pavement!"

Our Position is now east of Highway #65 and our guns are along a nice little stream bed. However, the stream is neither nice nor little when it rains. Most everyone has taken a bath and washed their clothes.

"I'm glad I am American  
It's nice to be free  
But I'd like to be a puppy  
If Hilter were a tree."

October 26, 1944

Today is another of those gloomy, rainy days, which chills even an American spirit. We moved on October 17th to another position along a stream. In this mountainous country there is no other choice. A few days ago we were being plastered regularly by enemy artillery. "B" battery had three men killed and others hurt. Don again had a close call. "A" battery still has its fingers crossed and digs in deep. To add to our misery, during the night the drizzle turned into a downpour. Foxholes were flooded, tents washed away, projectiles rolled down the raging stream and for awhile there was danger of losing #two gun. Our foot bridge to the kitchen washed out and we are using a 2½ ton truck to ferry men to breakfast. It looks now as though we will need a destroyer to get to dinner.

Lt. Meyers and I have our little tent covering a dugout in the back side of a hill. We are about one quarter mile from a bridge and the enemy may be trying to hit it. Yesterday I was looking out and saw a shell hit about fifty yards away. Clothes were flying through the air and I was afraid they had hit somebodies dugout. I ran down to see if anybody was hurt. Two men had covered their barracks bags with a tarp and it had taken a direct hit. I stuck my head in one dugout to see if anybody was hurt. One man had a small fragment in his jaw, but he insisted he was allright and politely advised me to get back in my hole.

November 19, 1944

Still in the same postion and it looks as though we will be for some time. Each day we try to haul in gravel and rocks to fill in the mud holes.

I made a trip to our observation post against the Colonel's wishes. He is convinced OP's are no place for battery commanders. We piled our equipment and rations in a jeep and took a one way road, which led from 'Boom" town and wound up the east side of the canyon. The engineers were working their hearts out to make the road passable and preparing drainage ditches to keep it from washing away. After

bouncing, sliding and grinding along for several miles with Peterson at the wheel, we came to a hill, which even a jeep could not climb. We loaded "C" rations, radio batteries, field glasses and bedding on our backs and followed the other pack mules over a narrow trail for two and one-half miles. We finally came to a hill with two little buildings on the crest. This was called Castelvechio, and was to be our observation post. From here we could see Bologna, the PO valley and the Alps on a clear day. We were just out of small arms range, but mortars kept us alert. The front was fairly quiet, so all we could observe were a few motor cyclists and a vehicle now and then. Three of us tried to sleep in a hole only big enough for one. The result was a cooperative slumber of fifteen minutes every hour. The remainder of the time was spent trying to turn over. It was one side or the other because there wasn't room for anyone to lay flat.

December 13, 1944

Christmas again in Italy? Oh how lovely! Such beautiful scenery, christmas trees covered with snow and ----(someone just hit me over the head for I was writing out loud)

Two nights ago four rounds of medium caliber (150 or 170mm) came into our area and I would judge the effect excellent. One hit six feet from the trail of one gun setting the net and powder on fire. Three men had minor injuries. If they had not been in a good dugout, "A" battery would have to requisition three new cannoneers. Another hit a pile of ammunition and blew it up, leaving a hole thirty feet in diameter and eight feet deep. This also ruined the net and blew down all the tents in the vicinity. A third round also hit a small pile of ammunition. A pretty good average, three out of four. We were fortunate, the shells and nets can be replaced, these men can never be replaced.

After a few close shells landed last night, Lt. Meyers and I decided to put up a row of sandbags around the Command Post. They are excellent to stop the wind, especially the kind, which goes zzzz wham!

December 22, 1944

First Sergeant Dummitt just brought in a piece of fruit cake. He went back and told Sergeant Byrd, "Boy I've got more pull than you have now." Their hole is close to mine and he said it loud enough for me to hear. Bryd had brought in some home made cookies the night before.

We made a triple purpose trip into Florence day before yesterday. First, we wanted to check on a legal matter for one of the men. Second, Sergeant Bartley was preparing to become a 2nd Lieutenant. Third, Corporal Vaughn had received a telegram which read, "Mother seriously ill, Come at Once." I was told by our personnel officer there was no chance of him going home, but I hated to give up without a try. I was greeted at 5th Army with, "What can I do for you, Captain?" I stated my business and pulled out the telegram. The next question was, "How long have you been overseas?" "Sixteen Months", I replied. The next question might as well have been, "Well, how is it back in the states?" However, he had enough courtesy to say, "I'm very sorry, we don't even consider a case of this kind unless the applicant has been overseas at least eighteen months." I asked a few

futile questions, and he handed me a ready made letter with all the answers. I tucked the telegram and letter in my shirt pocket and wondered how it would feel to be a veteran instead of a novice in this damn war.

Yesterday the battery commanders and Major Douglas made the round-about trip to see an eight inch gun in position near Loiano. The outfit was a part of the British Eight Army, attached to Fifth Army. General Jay, II Corp Artillery Commander had personally submitted plans for the gun pit. They carried out his plan to the letter, using eleven thousand sandbags in the process. The British Lieutenant hoped the exhibition would not cause us all a lot of extra work, especially patting our sand-bags square like bricks.

Today we heard about and saw the new fuse. The big question now is, what effect will it have on shortening the war?

December 30, 1944

This year is rapidly drawing to a close. The possibility of an early victory began to fade three months ago. The dimming of our hopes turned into a reality, climaxed by the present successful counter offensive by the Germans in Belgium. We are thinking seriously, for the first time, of a possible withdrawal. Maybe I should say an advance to the rear. The 92nd Division has yielded a few thousand yards on our left, and the 85th Division has been sent in to help them.

Christmas this year was more enjoyable than last, even though a year ago we thought we might be nearer home than we are. There were an enormous amount of packages this holiday season. Apparently, the folks at home have been informed that combat soldiers do not like to get such articles as shoe shining kits, neckties, and life savers.

January 1, 1945

One year ago, I remember writing something about a victorious New Year. That still goes. Now, I say this is the year to finish the Jerries. I am bound to guess the right year sooner or later.

"A" battery officers were invited over to "B" battery last night for a genuine Italian spaghetti supper. After enjoying it immensely we bowled, using a game Lt. Douglas had received from his wife. The pins were stamped on one side of ten different dice. Captain Driscoll had made some candy, so we ate candy and drank grape-fruit juice, with a few New Years eve vitamins added. I wonder if too many vitamins will cause dizziness. Just to make the game a bit more interesting, we played for 50¢ per game and "B" battery won three in a row. After that something happened and "B" battery lost several lira. Lt. Douglas swore he would cancel his wife's allotment the next morning.

January 16, 1945

For the first time in our combat days, we have prepared a position behind us. Because, I suppose, of the counter attack in Belgium we have taken added precautions. We were given instructions on how to destroy our guns if necessary. The snow is waist deep in places.



January 18, 1945

The Russian offensive is going well. We are eating, sleeping, shooting a little and trying to keep warm. Keeping warm is a big problem. Joe Metrailler, my orderly, builds a fire, which melts the ice on the side of the tent. Did you ever try to pull on your pants with some body pouring cold water down your neck?

The bull-dozer driver told me of his experience the morning his brakes froze. He had reached the top of a long hill and started down when the big brute went out of control. It picked up considerable speed toward the bottom, crossed a ditch, barely missed a trailer, passed between two pyramidal tents filled with men and came to a stop against another hill. An 88th Division Infantry Officer came running to the scene and could not tell whether to raise hell or wind his watch. After looking at the tracks between the tents, he decided the driver ought to have a medal for staying with it and guiding it. Geison, the driver, laughed and said, "I guess he didn't know I couldn't guide it, and I was even too damn scared to jump off."

February 11, 1945

The Russians are pressing ever closer to Berlin and our western armies are inching forward again. This final phase of the war reminds me of cider making time. First the apples are chewed to bits in the mill. Second the pulp is pressed until the juice and the worms pop out - a nice reference to Hitler. When the mill is cleaned up we will be ready to enjoy the end product - Life.

Several of us took a little trip and had the fortune or misfortune of picking up an army nurse, who was not particular who she rode with. She was going back to the states, but wanted to visit a particular Lieutenant Colonel before she left. The Colonel seemed to be expecting his eagles or rank of full Colonel. As we rode along she thought it would be quite clever to walk in, hand him a pair of birds, and say "Colonel here are your chickens." We traveled along and she saw an old hen or two, so we began stopping at the farm houses. Each time we stopped she became more desperate and she boosted her price to 3 candy bars, 2 packs of cigarettes, one pair of silk hose and 2 hundred lira (\$2). At one place a turkey gobbler strutted by, but she took the wind out of his sails by calling him a beautiful rooster. We finally came to a place where the lady had as much buyer resistance as my mother. The nurse got her hands on one unfortunate bird, tied his legs and tossed him in the Command Car. She then started begging for another and would not pay until she got it.

On February 8th we had the extreme pleasure of policing up the area, and entertaining the Commanding Officers of II Corp Artillery, 77th F.A. Group and 936th F.A. Battalion, at a special event. The battery adjusted on an enemy gun before the General arrived and stopped just before firing the 125,000th round. This projectile had the slogan "Bonnie to Adolph" painted on its side. Bonnie was our code name. The General pulled the lanyard and the air observer promptly reported a target hit, as previously arranged by Colonel Kennedy. The General took it with a grain of salt, and casually remarked, "That is one less for you to worry about."

February 19, 1945

On February 5th the 34th and 88th Divisions made a reconnaissance in force to test the enemy positions. The battalion fired large quantities of ammunition on enemy batteries, using some of the new variable time fuses. Some units reached their objectives, others did not. All returned to their starting places. I kept the new fuses under my cot for awhile, as they are top secret.

Last night a mouse got to a piece of chocolate in my trousers pocket. I was not in them at the time and they were lying at the head of my cot. The little cuss was welcome to the candy, if he had only used the hole, which was already there but, no, he had to make one of his own:

February 20, 1945

My stove just failed and I had to clean it out, so if you find a few smudged spots, it is soot and not Italian mud. Wood became so hard to find we converted to fuel oil and it plugs up the stove pipe. Instead of taking the pipe down each day, I drop grains of gun powder down it from the outside. This serves a triple purpose, knocking the soot loose, burning it out and warming the tent. I thought of installing a hopper, which would let a few grains trickle down continuously, but my inventiveness was lacking. Lieutenant Meyers, my tent mate, did not think much of the idea.

I took a stroll around the battery area to check on loose articles and care of equipment. We sometimes forget where Uncle Sam gets all of his nickles. We combine our trips with "B" battery for water, gas and rations to save on transportation and fuel. We are conscious of the tremendous cost, but more concerned with having the guns in shape to fire, vehicles ready to go and all other items serviceable. There is one little expense we all try to avoid - ten thousand dollars life insurance.

A young Italian man of about twenty-five years asked, "Why is America so rich and Italy so poor?" A good question, but a hard answer. Mussolini built tanks, guns and war planes instead of farm tractors and machinery. Consequently, they farm with a hoe, except the big operator, who has a team of oxen and a wooden plow. The women work hard and they don't know what a washing machine is. I gave a lady \$1.50 for doing a little bundle of laundry. She had to do it in an ice cold stream.

March 6, 1945

On the last day of February, we had a call for Battery Commanders and Battalion Staff to report to IV Corps headquarters for instructions. The move took us back Highway #65 to Florence, to Pistoia and up Highway #64 to the front lines. We were attached to the 424 F.A. group of IV Corps. Our mission was support of the tenth mountain division, who appeared to be a rugged, hard fighting outfit. The first night, the forward party borrowed some blankets and slept on the floor of a room in Group headquarters. Captain King and Captain Mac Dougal flipped to see who got the only cot. Captain Mac won, or thought he did, until it got so cold he had to move down on the floor with the rest of the junior officers. The next morning we selected positions close to the road and borrowed a bull dozer from the Engineers to make the gun pits. One gun came in at 1430 and registered. The attack

was scheduled for the next day, but was delayed one day. When the time came good progress was made and limited objectives were taken.

March 23, 1945

Spring is here again and with it a general house cleaning. The order is to get everything in fine shape. If there is any time left we might fire a mission or two. Lt. Byrd has been spending a lot of time with the kitchen crew. After two days work they have everything spotless. Last evening a man and mule stopped by the mess kit water to let a vehicle pass. He was not there long, but long enough to leave some droppings. Lt. Byrd looked out of his tent and saw what had happened. He became furious, for he thought someone was playing a dirty trick on him. He had it cleaned up and found out later how it got there. Just a warning, mule beware!

Lt. Meyers and I slept in a small wall tent in the same spot for four months. We moved to Highway #64 to support the tenth Mountain Division and came back to the same position we had been in all winter. While we were gone, an Italian family dug up a large flask of wine in the exact spot my cot had been. There was also a large flask of wheat and one of flour. I'll bet they could hardly wait for us to move on.

We have been bothered with rats and mice this winter. One member of the kitchen crew caught fifteen mice in his trap. Someone put up a sign, which read "Rats Den". A few days later someone added to the sign, "And Crabs, Keep Out!" I believe they were called "Cooties" in World War I. Two men became infected and asked the medic for help. He suggested vinegar, but like our eggs, potatoes, carrots, milk and mail, it is highly concentrated. Someone made the remark, "You better be a little careful with that stuff, the Doc has not had much practice grafting skin, especially where you have the crabs."

April 3, 1945

Easter has come and gone once more. We had services in the battery area and most everyone brought his helmet to sit on. Those who did not, pulled up a sand bag or a box. The portable organ and thirty or forty voices furnished the music. The only females in the choir, and the chief distraction, were two little Italian girls, about eight and ten years of age. Like some American girls I know, they wanted every-one to see them and their new Easter bonnets. The American Red Cross had even reached this part of the world and they were sporting new bandanas over their hair.

April 16, 1945

We were hosts to a Battery Commander, Executive Officer and five Chief-of-sections. They were just entering the battle of Italy and wanting answers to a few questions. After two weeks without a shell in close, Jerry decided to drop a couple in the area. They were almost a quarter of a mile away, but close enough to answer a question one of the Sergeants had just asked, "How do you tell the difference between a shell coming in and one going out?" Judging from the way they hit the dirt, I would say they all learned very quickly.

The final "All Out" assault has begun. It was not a push off at one time all along the line, but rather a coordinated series of H hours. Artillery marked the targets for the bombers, while Anti-aircraft artillery put up a line of air bursts, as a guide to keep

the bombers from dropping their loads too short. The 6th South African division and the tenth Mountain Division are spear heading the attack. The plan is to cut west of Bologna and keep going.

Memorial services were held in the battery area for our departed Commander-in-chief, Franklin Roosevelt. Taps were played on the field organ. Only parts of the music could be heard because of the roar of planes, the rumble of tank destroyers, and the sporadic fire of artillery. Thanks to him and his leadership of the American people, the tanks, planes and guns, which almost drowned out the farewell of the organ, were ours. All Ours!

The second tragedy of the week was the death of Ernie Pyle, a true front line reporter. The reporter who has been able to express in plain and simple words what the ordinary soldier goes through; what he sees, what he does, how he lives, what he thinks about, and how he feels toward his buddies, the war and the people at home. His ability to do this came as a result of his close association with front line elements. His reputation and devotion to doing the proper job has been the cause of his death on the front line in the Pacific.

April 21, 1945

The 5th Army has broken out into the PO. valley. We are in support of the Italian troops known as the "Loiano Gruppe". For once in our stretch, we are not in a spearhead. The main force is on our left and going nicely up Highways #64 and #65. The Italian troops are following the withdrawing Germans and prodding them here and there.

Most every nation is proud of its fighting ability. Soldiers normally pick the weakness of the other nation's soldiers and talk about it. We think British troops are the most confused drivers on the road, except Brazilians and Italians. They think the same about Americans. Whipping the Jerries is of primary importance, and our short-comings are secondary. With this in mind, I will take the risk of telling a few of our experiences with the Italian soldiers. Yesterday, while looking for gun positions, we walked past a column of Infantry packing for a hike. They were singing, drinking wine, and having a good time - perhaps their last, for the hike was into Jerry land. One man tossed a hand grenade into a little ditch, probably to break the monotony. Some of the more sober ones didn't think it was funny. They knocked him around a bit and kicked him where it would do the most good.

Later this same company were trudging, single file, up a mountain trail. Without warning, rifles, tommy guns and even a machine gun started firing. We ducked and wondered if they had run into the enemy. Apparently not, for all we could see was a Jack rabbit loping by us. They had not touched him.

May 24, 1945

On May 2nd the war in Italy ended. There was a feeling of relief among the troops, but it was more a feeling of "school being out for summer vacation." Wild exhibitions, that might have been expected earlier, gave way to a feeling of gratitude, thoughts of home, and sorrow for those, who gave their life for this victory. The more hilarious expressions of victory were displayed by Italian civilians, who told us as early as April 30th: "La guerra tutti finito." (the war is finished)

Back to our last days of the campaign. After elements of the 34th, 91st and 88th Divisions, along with the 6th South African and British 8th Army units, broke into Bologna, our battalion drove up Highway 65 into the long sought City. We had passed through the fortified winter line and the no-mans land before it. Since October, this area had been peppered with machine guns, mortars, artillery and bombs. Needless to say, there were very few trees, houses or anything else left standing. We skirted Bologna, started up Highway 9 toward Milan, then cut back to the right toward the PO river. The battalion occupied several assembly areas, but did not fire again until we came within range of the river. The Jerries were on the run and our men pressed on. The discomforts of very dirty roads, long hours, long marches, and the usual disagreeable things were countered by the feeling that we were making great progress toward ending the war. Destroyed equipment and the usual signs of a beaten enemy were scarce, at first, but accumulated as we neared the PO. There were burned out vehicles on the road and in the ditches. At one place, a 88mm gun, with its prime mover, was caught pulling onto the road by a dive bomber. At this place our forward party was greeted with a "Hello" from an elderly man sitting on the curb. We all turned in surprise at the English spoken word, greeted him, but went on our way. We were to meet the Battalion Commander at a cross road in twenty minutes. We gave our area a quick inspection and passed the old gentleman on our way back. He again greeted us in English and could speak the language very well, having been to the United States. He wanted us to remove an unexploded shell from his house. We really did not care for that job and told him we did not have the time. Before we could get away, he wanted to know where we were going, what we were doing and why. Ordinarily we would say, "No kapish" (do not understand) and walk away, but that would not work in this case.

As soon as the battalion entered one assembly area, a forward party was called to look for another. This time it was close to the PO river, as we were to support the crossing near Ostiglia. We registered on the north side as soon as we got into position. By this time the enemy was getting cut up into small groups, and there was wild disorder and a desperate attempt to get across the river. At this point it was four to five hundred yards wide, but not very swift.

Back in Africa we saw Arabs, who had stripped bodies for fire-arms and clothing. Today we saw an Italian wearing a pair of German boots. A few hundred yards down the road we passed the former owner.

Again we moved laterally along the river, north and northwest to a position, less than a mile from the south bank. In this position the men caught horses, which the Jerries had abandoned. We could have converted to Cavalry, as there were quite a number of them.

Fascists were quite numerous, but caused very little trouble. In some cases they were punished by the Italians. A favorite trick was to cut the hair close to the head and parade the victim up and down the street. Men were sometimes locked up. Punishment, in most cases, was left to the Partisans and Italian Government. Justice was not always master of the confusion.

Several enemy planes made a pass at our bridge across the river. Their bombs shook us a little, even though they landed a half mile away.

Soon we were to cross the river, but we had to get road clearance

and a time, as there were hundreds of vehicles waiting to cross. The battalion drove along the south bank for several miles and saw some of the material, which the Jerries would never use again. They also made certain that no one else would use it. Vehicles, guns and equipment not destroyed by our air force and ground force were set on fire or blown up by the retreating enemy.

By April 30th the end was coming, like a giant felled tree, gaining momentum and about to crash to a sudden stop. Anything was likely to happen. We picked up two suspicious looking civilians, because they could not speak Italian. They claimed to be Partisans, who were helping our side, but we turned them over to the Police. May 1st seemed late in the game to be changing sides.

Two thousand SS German troops broke out of Venice and cut their way across the highway in front of us. Anybody who happened to get in their path was unfortunate, including some women and children.

Prisoners were pouring into the cages in ever increasing numbers. Our columns were pushing into the Alps. Now the stream of prisoners grew to an avalanche. They brought in their own vehicles filled with men who were through. Resistance was only scattered.

On May 2nd our advanced elements were deep in the Alps, and taking direction from German road markers. German sentries began guarding our vehicles in the foremost places. The fighting was over, but the confusion was not. One day men were shooting each other. The next day they were trying to trade with the enemy. Cigarettes for Lugers, which was a prized German pistol. Some of the German officers were allowed to keep their side arms, but the men were disarmed.

At Bassano del Grappa we guarded prisoners and relaxed. Two weeks later we were recalled to Modena, on the southern edge of the valley, to guard an ordnance plant. There was misunderstanding and confusion around Udine and Trieste. Again we made the long hard march with our tractors and guns across the PO valley. East of Udine the battalion formed a strong point and dug in machine gun positions. This was a friendly war of nerves with the Yugoslavian Partisans. There seemed to be a question of who was to occupy the country around Trieste. Artillery, tanks, and other units paraded in their midst, while the air force buzzed overhead. The bluff was good and the Partisans turned in their arms.

May 29, 1945

We drove to the Swiss border yesterday, but on the pole blocking the road was this sign. "Sorry, we too would like to visit Switzerland. But! see your chaplain". The best we could do was throw stones across the small stream, which formed the boundry.

Our rest hotel is in Stresa, which is on the west bank of Lake Maggiore. Before the war this resort country entertained a lot of tourists. Anyone can soon see why. There are palm trees along the edge of the lake, hedges down by the pier, great magnolia trees, ferns, vines, shrubs and flowers of all descriptions. The climate is very agreeable and the weather excellent.

On our trip to the border we stopped at a pretty new cottage, which was built on a curve of the mountain overlooking the road and lake. I was thinking how much I would like to have one like it in Colorado, when a lady spoke to us in English from an upstairs window. We were invited in and asked to sit down to sip some wine. In the next



hour we heard all the familiar stories of the stealing Germans and Fascists, black market operations, exorbitant prices of living and various other troubles. The lady had lived in London most of her life, while her husband was a wealthy Italian. Like many others they had planned to sit back and enjoy life, but the war changed all that. Money does not help much, when salt and sugar are unavailable. Beautiful dishes and walnut tables look even more empty than plain china and common pine.

May 30, 1945

For those who died that we might live, this day was set aside. They went into the battle knowing they might not come out, but there are forces greater than fear. Were they the unlucky ones? Rather than unlucky, they were the bravest of all. Is it possible that men would rather die than turn back to safety? Can there be a force stronger than the basic instinct of self preservation? How do men overcome the overwhelming desire to live? There are many forces to keep men from turning "yellow". The fear of being a coward is as great as any.

July 1, 1945

Another month gone, but this last one seems like a year. We are leading a very quiet life now. No excitement whatever. The 936th F.A. Battalion became a replacement depot during the month. Anyone with 85 or more points were shipped to the 631st F.A. Battalion and the others to the 530 F.A. Battalion. I, with a measly 82 points, call the 77th F.A. Group my outfit and am trying to fill the S3 job.

The old outfit moved a few nights ago, so I went over to tell them Good-bye. That was the hardest thing I have done for a long time. After drilling, sweating, laughing, sleeping and cringing in the same fox holes for three years one cannot just say: "So long Joe, it's been nice knowin'ya." That is not without choking a few times. Parting from such friends is another of those times, when words are so inadequate. Even the usually fluent Colonel Kennedy had very little to say, but planted a fatherly kiss on my cheek when I left. What pleased me the most was having one of my Sergeants drop over to tell me good-bye. In school there is a term called "Apple Polishing". In the army we have a term similar in meaning, but not so respectable in print. Most men would rather be accused of "cheating on their buddies" than \_\_\_\_\_ (apple polishing). This sergeant could certainly not be accused of that. He seemed to be allergic to officers, always polite and courteous, but generally uneasy in their presence. He had always carried on his job in a quiet efficient manner. Expecting no privileges and asking none. He thought a great deal of his men and was greatly concerned about their welfare. I was pleasantly surprised to have him drop in and leave a few words of gratitude and appreciation. Some piled it on thick, but a few words from him were worth more to me than a citation from a General.

Some of the men, who had been transferred to the new outfit, slipped back to our battery whenever they could get away. It seems I had let them get into some bad habits. The first week one man was confined for not saluting the Captain and another reprimanded for not having his belt buckle lined up with his shirt buttons. Some were

short a knife or a fork and had been since Cassino. You might get knocked off trying to wash fried egg from the tines of a fork. He could always slap it on a slice of bread and eat it in his foxhole. This being the case some utensils fell by the wayside. The outfits, who fought the last thirty days only, would not understand.

My new Commanding Officer, Colonel Isaacson has gone to a show and left his dog locked up in his room. I think he will chew off the door knob or break down the door. He is a big German Boxer that belonged to a member of SS General Wolfe's staff. His massive, powerful jaws can snap off cats heads in one bite. That's all it took on the first one.

August 27, 1945

Back in Rome again waiting for Uncle Sam to send us home. During the month the Japs took a terrific beating and finally surrendered, thanks to a couple of persuaders.

During the past six weeks our unit went through training for the Jap war. The wars end put a stop to that. We had a fairly comfortable spot less than a mile from the east bank of Lake Garda. Many afternoons were spent in its clean cool water.

So this is the end of Hitler's bid for power and control of half the world. Our prayers have been answered and we are going home to live like human beings are supposed to live.

