

HEADQUARTERS  
Third United States Army  
G-3 Section  
APO 403  
c/o Postmaster  
New York, New York

GERMANY

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Dear Miss Blaney,

I am thoroughly ashamed of myself for not writing to you sooner, but I am sure you will forgive me. We have just completed the heinous job of conquering the Germans and everyone here is mighty glad that it has ended. There have been no celebrations, but we certainly feel great and trust now that it will not be very long before departing these parts for the United States.

After spending three very nice, but suspenseful, months in the beautiful, picturesque city of Luxembourg, capital of the Grande Duchy de Luxembourg, we received orders to prepare for movement into Germany. It gave me a rather funny feeling for up to then we were fighting in liberated countries. None of us knew what to expect, but I assure you we did not look for anything good. Our orders came and we loaded the trucks during the afternoon of 26 March. The following morning we assembled and were briefed and instructed to man all guns in case of an air attack and left our CP at 0800.

The weather was rather cool and cloudy and I am happy to relate that the trip was uneventful, but enjoyable. Driving along the Moselle River into Trier, we passed countless vineyards on the hills and in the plain country. As you can guess, this area is the home of the famous Moselle Wine. The hills were very steep and the vines ran up and down, in some of the places almost straight up. Every so often you would see a path winding around the hill and disappearing in the distance.

Parts of Trier (the oldest city in Germany and probably in Europe) had been badly damaged by artillery and air poundings, while other parts were undamaged. On the whole, though, there was very little of the city which could be considered in good condition. Our air pulverization policy was quite thorough and played no favorites.

The fields throughout the section of Germany that we have travelled so far are laid out very symmetrically. They have very few fences - just open fields stretching great distances until suddenly interrupted by high hills. Every available piece of land is used for agricultural purposes; even high up on the sides of the hills, otherwise covered by brush, there are small plots of plowed ground.

A common sight in the fields were the teams of oxen and cows - horses are a rarity now. Women have replaced the men who went to war.

Our first stop in Germany was at Idar-Oberstein. Our CP was located in the showplace of the German Army. The Caserne was built on top of a plateau - the highest spot in town. The buildings were very well built. The foundations were of colored stone, the upper wall a dark green stucco, and the roofs red tile.

This Caserne was used for publicity purposes throughout Germany to induce German youth to enlist in the Wehrmacht before conscription was put into effect.

We could overlook the city of Oberstein from our office window as it was built in the valley between very high hills and extended for several miles on either side of a small stream. It was a pretty little town and clean except for the rubble caused by bombings.

The CP remained in Idar-Oberstein for one week, then drove deeper into Germany after crossing the Rhine River, going through more typical countryside and climbing higher into the hills. Our new CP was located at Frankfurt am Main.

Passing through Mainz while en route to Frankfurt, I saw not one building standing intact. The city was completely and utterly destroyed, apparently sometime ago by the RAF. It was just one huge mass of rubble. In spite of that fact, the people were well dressed and seemingly in good health. At least, they looked healthy enough. Throughout Germany, for the most part, the older people just stand and stare whereas the smaller children feebly wave. Some of the youngsters ask for cigarettes and chocolate as we pass by, but never receive any.

It was at Mainz where we crossed the Rhine River over a ponton bridge. It was the longest tactical ponton bridge ever constructed - 1896 feet long. The site chosen for the bridge had evidently been a ferry site for on both sides of the river were decorative gateways and steps leading down to the water. The main bridge further downstream and the railroad bridge upstream had, of course, been destroyed.

It was a beautiful, sunny day for our move. We drove through the destroyed city of Frankfurt to our new location on the north side of the city. F. W. Woolworth had a large store in this city. This time we were located in a German Cavalry School. There was a large equestrienne statue on the gatepost and a majority of the buildings were stables. The buildings were grey stucco and in bad repair. As a matter of fact, they lacked everything - even water. Our engineers quickly remedied that, however, and the next day we had running water. We found a training schedule dated March, 1945, posted on a bulletin board on the first floor of the building we used as billets for the enlisted men.

Leaving Frankfurt on 11 April, we travelled on the Autobahn (super highway) to Hersfeld. The day was chilly, but the sun was very bright and

warm. During the entire trip, there was a steady stream of C47s shuttling back and forth carrying supplies to the front and evacuating wounded and liberated PWs to the rear. These transports were certainly a great aid in this war and did a number of varied jobs other than what they were intended for.

Driving along the Autobahn just out of Frankfurt via a cloverleaf turn, we were amazed to find that it was in fairly good shape. We drove on this super highway for approximately 75 miles. It is a double-lane highway divided by a narrow strip of grass. It is not so well groomed as our Merritt Parkway at home, but quite a pleasant change from the ordinary type of road. Extensive use is made of bridges and overpasses so that we did not have to cross other roads. Several bridges had been blown and in one instance we had to pass over a bridge which had partially dropped down into the river bed yet was strong enough to allow us to drive over it. There were very few gasoline stations except at road junctions. The highway encircles the station, giving them pumps at all the intersections. Most of them had been burned or damaged by bombs.

The Colonel, Captain, and I took a side road in order to visit a military cemetery where one of the officers of this headquarters had been buried. He had been killed on a trip, having been ambushed by the Krauts.

At that cemetery, I saw dead men with no heads, arms, or legs. It was a sight that made you hate every German who was able to walk or breathe. Fortunately, I do not know how else to express it, there were not many dead being brought in.

Finally, we arrived at our CP in Hersfeld. It was one of the better-class Casernes of Germany. Perched on top of the gate, was a large steel German eagle which General P immediately had taken down. The buildings were of tan stucco and in excellent shape. Once again, we were situated high on a hill.

For the first time in all our moves across France, Luxembourg, and Germany, we had PWs to unload and carry our equipment for us. It was a great help as "moving day" is quite a strenuous one.

The Autobahn was just a short distance away and the traffic was never ending. Almost every night, the convoys would be strafed and on one night a lone German plane bombed the highway at a spot not very far away from us.

Nestled in the valley by a small stream, an Evacuation Hospital was set up in tents and up on the hill, just south of us, was the Liaison Squadron. The Squadron has Piper Cubs which are used in conjunction with our Liaison Section. Our Liaison Officers use them to fly to their headquarters and back to Army in order to expedite the dissemination of information. On several occasions, our only communication with an outfit was by plane. The "Grasshoppers" could be seen landing and taking off all day long. We were also on the main route of the C47s and from the first ray of dawn to the last streak of sunset, you could hear and see them plying back and forth between the rear and the front lines.

It was at Hersfeld that we saw our first movies in Germany. They are a wonderful aid in helping us to relax and we all missed them.

We were told that we were to move to Weimar. Weimar is just about five miles from the notorious Buchenwald Concentration, or more aptly called, extermination camp. Everyone was making the trip and coming back with some horrible stories. The Colonel came in and asked me if I would like to see the camp and of course I said I would. A day off would benefit me a great deal. So on the morrow, we were to drive to Buchenwald.

The narrative I am about to write will not be a very pleasant vehicle to read. In fact, I shall do a very poor job of expressing in words that which I saw with my own eyes. It will be very difficult for you to visualize or conceive of the things about which I shall write. My words or even the words of the most competent author could not completely portray the scenes which I witnessed. Anything I might state on the ensuing pages will be most inadequate. The pictures that you will see and the stories that you will hear are no exaggerations of the actual conditions that existed.

It was a beautiful day and we drove along a super highway most of the time. This is certainly a beautiful country and for the life of me I cannot understand the attitude of these people. Hitler sure did catch them during a weak spell to be able to abrogate whatever good principles (if they ever had any) for which they strove before he became the power.

As I mentioned above, the day was lovely and the road a good one.... such a contrast to the horrible pictures we were to see. The scenic beauty of this country on either side of the highway was magnificent. God's handiwork very deftly accomplished. The grass was green and the foliated shrubbery and trees proudly boasted of their splendor as they wearisomely swayed in the gentle breezes. Despite these implications, however, everything seemed so much alive and very happy about it. Occasionally - especially while driving through a town or city - you were aware that some holocaust had been or was taking place. Out in the country, the only signs of war were the many women who were doing the work which would have otherwise been done by the men - absentees, who would (I boldly imagine) much rather be tilling the soil.

We consumed our K Ration in just such a spot. The birds were chirping happily in the trees and the only other sounds we heard were the hoarse, guttural voices of the women giving directions to the animals (horses are replaced by cows and oxen). We spent about thirty minutes in that tranquill setting and then proceeded to our destination. As I look back on our journey to this place, it was a shame to continue.

Yes, our journey's end brought us to the Buchenwald Concentration Camp. We over here had read and heard tales of the events which took place at such a camp, but in order to have an unrestricted conception of the atrocities which took place you really must visit one of these "centers" in order to possess the full realization of how these people thought and worked. They are beasts and nothing more.

We approached this concentration camp driving along this beautiful road and saw what was once a large modern factory. In fact, there were many such buildings - munitions factories. On our right, was the camp with a high

barbed wire fence around it and many guard posts located at evenly-spaced intervals.

With problem of parking our vehicle settled, the three of us received passes and entered the camp proper through huge heavy gates. Once inside, you immediately felt like turning around and leaving. The Colonel asked one of the prisoners - liberated by our troops - to be our guide. We hesitated a moment to take a panoramic view of the camp. There were many buildings used as barracks or blocks as the Germans called them and many prisoners were strolling aimlessly about the grounds.....freed, but still bound by a year or two or three and perhaps longer of conditioning to the German yoke.

Our guide thought it best to proceed to the right and walk down to the rear, across the rear and back up on the left to the gate. Before we began the "tour," we were told of everything that happened in the different buildings.

The first building was a small one and located within a very high fence which made it quite intriguing and we all wondered what occurred within such an enclosure. We soon learned. Inside the fence, we walked to the building, which was constructed something similar to a cottage. We descended a flight of stairs and found ourselves in a spotlessly white room with absolutely nothing in it but five hooks in the wall near the ceiling, a very heavy mallet, and an elevator. The hooks were used to hang the prisoners - two on a hook - and the mallet used to complete the job if the hanging proved ineffective. The elevator was then put into motion to carry the bodies upstairs to the crematorium.

There were twelve ovens in this crematorium; each large enough to accommodate a very tall person or a very stout person. They were huge things encased in brick and meticulously in order. However, when we overran the camp, these fiends did not have enough time to remove three charred bodies, each one in a separate oven. They were mute evidence of what happened to the helpless dead. I began to get a funny feeling inside of me. Just then the Major motioned to me to look out of the window. I did - and I could not believe my eyes.

Just outside the window, stacked like so many crates, were the naked bodies of about fifty dead men. What a sight! Horror and fright written on every face. These men died the previous night from "natural" causes. Yes, from natural causes such as starvation, maltreatment, etc. The prisoners were made to carry these bodies from the blocks and place them outside the crematorium all ready for the final stage of this diabolical pattern.

The guide informed us that their meals consisted of 10 grams of oleo at about 0800. Their next "meal" was served at 2000 and it was just a very small slice of dark bread. In about an hour or at 2100 hours, they were given one-seventh of a tin of corned beef. Sometimes they would receive just the oleo and nothing else. Oh, yes, they were given a cup of water during the day, also, but never with their meals.

Even though we moved away from that horrible building, the scenes I

had just witnessed remained in my mind and will for a long time to come. We walked down one of the streets lined with barracks or blocks as they are called and among the inmates. Some were dressed in grey uniforms with vertical green stripes. These were the "honored" ones and were permitted to work in the armament factories (now just a mass of rubble) across the road. Others were clad in what was once a white uniform with vertical blue stripes. These people never left the camp, but did the menial chores about the place.

By the way, their clothing - for all seasons - consisted of one pair of trousers and one shirt.....no shoes, stockings, underclothing, or winter clothing such as an overcoat, gloves, etc. They could never launder these articles as they were all they received.

The blocks were constructed of wood and in bad repair. Living conditions were miserable, filthy. You cannot conceive, no matter how vivid your imagination, of the existence these humans endured. The bedding was the same issued to them the first day they entered the camp. Since most of the prisoners had been there for at least two years, and some longer, you can guess the status of the bedding. However, our troops had given some of them clean bedding the day before our visit. The guide told us that these buildings were considered fine barracks compared with Block #61. I thought they were awful and really did not care to go any further. We began to get whiffs of a stench which is beyond description.

It seemed miles to Block #61. It was set off by itself in another section with a barbed wire fence all around it. The stench was terrific. I cannot ever remember seeing such a filthy place. The prisoners were walking about - that is, those who were strong enough to walk.....skeletons, with flesh tightly pulled over their bones. They were horrible sights, but through no fault of their own. Most of them were simple-minded individuals now -- their mouths open wide and their eyes fixed in a stare.

Inside Block #61, there were hundreds in bed. To call shelves beds is a misnomer. Yes, there were shelves all along both walls up to the ceiling. I think there were four or five shelves stretched out the entire length of the building. These men were placed on these shelves like bottles of wine - about six men to an area six feet wide. I do not know how they got in or out as I did not observe that feat performed. I assure you, however, that the majority of them were too weak to move and remained in their beds (shelves) all of the time.

The stench was getting worse all the time. I thought I would be overcome by it. Any minute now and I would be a sick man. Subtly, I tried to hurry the two officers in the party without exposing my condition, but I am afraid I was not successful.

Human fecies was all over the place - in their beds (shelves), on the floor, and in the area outside the building. These poor people were not to blame; there were no facilities available. ~~How~~ How any human being could survive in such a filthy environment is difficult to understand. Some of these men will live because of the care given them by our medicos; not because of

the treatment they received in the hands of the Germans. Others are too far gone and will pass on to their Maker. I finally got outside into the fresh air if you can call it that with this nauseating stench permeating it. I was not sick, but I shall never be able to explain why I was not.

The next building we came to was a stucco one. We did not go inside this one, but looked through the windows. What we saw will explain why we did not go in. This was filled with more dead bodies and these were all covered with lye. I do not know how many there were, but I am sure there were at least twice as many in this "pile" as there were in the other. We did not linger very long there and were walking once more toward the gate. Our guide informed us that these men had also died the previous night.

So far, we had covered the right side and the rear of the camp with the left side remaining to be seen. I thought, "Will we never get out of this place."

Walking back toward the gate, we passed a group of stucco buildings. These, too, were enclosed in a barbed wire fence. We asked the guide what it all meant and he told us that these blocks housed the strongest of the prisoners and that they were used as human guinea pigs. Also, that these men were doomed to die for the glory of the German race. Yes, from these men was to be extracted serums to combat the deadly germs of typhus, etc. These strong prisoners were given injections of infectious diseases so that they would contract that disease and later give up the precious serum necessary to fight these fatal ailments. We civilized people use animals for this purpose, but not the Germans. They use humans.

Near the gate, we entered another building - the office of the camp commander. We entered through a sort of laboratory, I guess, although I could not see any use for such an elaborate set-up. Anyway, there were jars of all sizes which contained every organ of the human body preserved in alcohol. The first one I saw contained the head of a human being. It had been shrunk a little and was slightly discolored. I walked to the opposite side to see the left of the face, but it was not there. They had cut the head in two and you saw the structural make-up of the cranium. As far as I was concerned, there was absolutely no reason to experiment.

The wife of the camp commander was very fond of lamp shades so her husband made her an extra special one. We did not see it as we did not have the time, but it was there to be seen. It was made from the flesh of one of the prisoners. Can you imagine going to that extent to satisfy a desire? These people are not human - they are fiends.

That is the end of the story - a true story. I know that I did not adequately express in words what I had seen, but it is sufficient to give you an idea of what we witnessed. If I did not see it myself, I am sure that I could not believe it, but it is true. How any of God's creatures can become so diabolically inhuman is beyond my comprehension.

By the way, one of our lower headquarters marched 5,000 German

civilians through the day before we visited the camp. I believe they should march every German through one of these concentration camps to show them just what their leaders were doing. I am positive that they were and are oblivious to such things. Perhaps it would make no difference, but it is worth the trial at least.

Instead of moving to Weimar, we turned south, but as yet not enough time has elapsed for me to write about it so I shall have to end here.

Now VE Day is here and all of us are turning our thoughts to home in the United States. Most of us, however, will not return for some months to come. I cannot get home fast enough, but I am afraid I shall be over here for almost another year, at least.

Please forgive me for writing a "mimeographed letter," but I owe so many people letters I could never catch up if I did not resort to this. Now that this thing is over, I shall be able to devote more time to correspondence and should not get in arrears again.

Thanks for bearing with me.

There sure have been many changes made at Bryant. Golly, I will not know the College when I return to the States, however, I am afraid that that will not be so soon.

I have not heard from many of the old "gang" recently; perhaps it is because I have not written many letters. Now that we have subdued the master race I expect to have more time, and will surely be able to answer every letter I receive.

I have met a number of men from home, but so far not one from Bryant. It seems so strange, too, as Bryant has so many men in the Service. It really is great to see someone from home.

Well, Miss Blaney, au revoir and I trust I shall soon be seeing all my good friends in Providence. Please say hello to everyone for me.

Sincerely,

*Nick Corasci*