

Muddy France:
10 November 1944.

Florence, sweetheart,

Your thoughts wishing me many happy returns to-day, on this my 37th birthday, reached me all right, and darling thanks so much. It is just as difficult for me to be in a happy mood this year being separated from you, but I will admit that the past year has been one of the most interesting and least desirable of the many years I have experienced. It has been ever so empty and lonely because of my absence from your side, and so rugged mentally because the life of a soldier is so contrary to my philosophy of Life. Fortunately being so far removed from front lines I don't see any action, but the results and consequences are in plain view and they are horrible. The time we spent together on my furlough and in St. Paul did ever so much to make it possible for me to carry on. From here in it will require much patience, but my sweetheart, we have the courage and stamina. Little gripes will come up here and there, and I probably will complain, but have no fear I'll see this thru in good style.

Living in an environment of mud and the ghostly ruins of a shattered French town a soldier has no alternative but to find himself thinking about the why, whence, and wherefore of this modern age. Civilized people, "so called", spend years, time and effort cultivating culture, peace and fraternalism in the front yard, and weapons of destruction, evil horrors and war in the back yard. I need not add how we Americans endeavor to do naught but keep peace and live in our own secluded world.

Traveling from state to state, and from country to country it has become vividly apparent that the citizens of these various entities also live with and for the same ideals that we at home do. The average Englishman or Frenchman seems to be desirous of living for the happiness of his happy home and family. Sitting here in the semi-darkness of our present home(?), contemplating the causes of this second World War in 25 years I arrived at the conclusion that perhaps the majority of the little men in the street of any country did not want this or any of the other wars that mar history. It may be beyond my humble comprehension to understand the causes of this war but I do believe that even the average enemy citizen had no more desire for this war than did our friends and relatives.

Before Congress made it lawful to kill Germans we continued to try to act civilized. Following the declaration of war we became a nation of people who were supposed to hate, kill and destroy everything Teutonic. Don't misunderstand me, I too feel keenly the necessity to give^{up} a life of culture, cleanliness, love and happiness for this deal. I also know that the Nazis would have made life miserable for us if they were to win this war, but if I am supposed to do all these evil things to Germans is there any reason why those German captured prisoners back in the states should live a life of luxury? In this part of the war front we are supposed to damn the Boche, hate him, desire to kill him, and yet in the Prisoner of War camps back home they live on the fat of the land, have an excellent diet that includes beer daily, and fairly good living quarters. To me the enemy remains the same whether he be confined in an American camp or one in France.

Since we have taken it upon ourselves to teach the enemy the difference between force and reason we must not lose sight of the dogma "Do unto others as you would others do unto you". It is unreasonable to expect to change the thoughts of these Nazis if we act and think the same as they do. Perhaps force and might is the new "order" of the day; then all our efforts to enlighten ourselves in the past have gone for naught. If this is so then let us hate, damn and kill Germans, but let us do it wherever we find them until the end. It seems to me though that our policy towards them should be consistent on both sides of the ocean.

Perhaps the day will come when men, not the little men, not the average men, but the leaders will see and realize that the theory of "The Survival of the Fittest" among peoples and nations is destructive, not constructive. Maybe the day will arrive when war, destruction,

disease and hunger, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse will be outlawed by God and man. Then perhaps peace and happiness will be the guiding light instead of the iron fist. If my efforts ~~to~~ help attain that end then my being a soldier has not been in vain. Would that I could believe that.

You will forgive my introspective thoughts on the above subject, but now I will devote the balance of my thoughts to the sweetest girl I know. Your letters dated 21 and 23 October were received on Wednesday and I did attempt to reply in a short V-Mail letter. Tonight however I had a very special thrill. It is my turn to act as CQ (charge of quarters) at battalion headquarters, which means I go to work at 5 P M and spend the balance of the night there (of course I sleep). Mail arrives a little later in the evening and as I was typing the first few paragraphs of this letter one of the boys delivered Jimmy's birthday greetings to his daddy. It was a wonderful surprise and thank you so very much, both you and he, for being so thoughtful. For a moment my throat filled up and I became more homesick than ever, but only for a moment because I realized the job calls for men who are not soft but who can hate the enemy.

Your letter sounds cheerful enough, and I do hope that all is well at home. The description of Jimmy's antics are a tonic for any thing that could ail me. I realize he is growing up and certainly am sorry I cannot be with you during these happy moments. Until this is over and I return home stay well and don't worry. Glad you spoke to Mrs Reese, and I assume she and her family are well. I wrote her a letter several weeks ago but I suppose her mail is also delayed as is yours. Note my new APO number on the envelope and use it until further notice. I hope this change of number will do much to expedite mail both ways. As yet no packages but they too are beginning to come thru for other men so I guess yours will turn up one of these days.

I recommended an article in the August 14th issue of Life to Mr Pincus, and I expect he will inquire of you for your copy of this issue. The article refers to the "break-thru in France" and the picture give you a pretty good idea of what war has done to French towns and villages. Looking at the real thing leaves one a bit more awe-stricken than seeing it in pictures but it will surely give you a rough idea of what there is to see in France.

All is well with me, plenty of work to keep me busy and I only wish I knew more about railroading so that I could earn a better rating but it begins to look as though I will continue to be a corporal for the duration. There is no incentive to go to this nearby town, and with no alternative, most evenings are devoted to letter writing or just bull sessions. Laundry is another problem but we have a wash board now so I manage very well there. There is always a shortage of cake and cookies, and I would like to have some maple sugar candy if any is available. It is most important however that all packages be very securely wrapped, because they are arriving here in the most pitiful conditions. Corrugated boxes look as though they have been thru the wringer, so please take every precaution when you do send a package.

Hope you, Jim, mom and pop are well and keeping their spirits high. Please kiss them all for me, and I'll kiss you in mind with all my love. My very best to all your family and to our good friends.

As ever,

George

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Cpl George Stoff 42050100
Co A 735th Ry Opn Bn
APO 562 c/o Postmaster
New York, N Y.



MRS. FLORENCE STOFF
3021 AVENUE "I"
BROOKLYN 10
NEW YORK



