

1 January 1945

Somewhere in France.

Dear Mom,

A little work and my own natural laziness have combined their "talents" recently to effect an indifference on my part to my letter-writing obligations. I'm part though, I suppose a slight lack of mail on this end has contributed to the let-down. It's not that you people aren't writing; but our mail has been irregular of late, and shows no signs of improving in the near future. Over a week ago I received quite a stack (an unusual occurrence) of letters & cards from Peg & you & Collon & Fil. I didn't, however, get a chance to read them until some 24 or more hours later. I hadn't thought I'd ever see the day ^{that would happen}. But then war knows no considerations for personal anxieties and feelings.

Let me thank you again for the 5-spot. I still have it; it makes a nice American souvenir. I've heard it said, incidentally, that American greenbacks garner a profitable exchange on the black market. Not good for inflation - suppressing, however.

I wonder if you've ever had the unusual feeling that goes with not bathing for a week or more? It's a queer, uneasy sensation - though quite prevalent over here. That's the situation we were in when we first arrived here. So, after completing the incidental but important tasks ever-desiring attention when we move someplace in this war-making job, we set about finding a suitable place to clean up.

Some other G.I.s in the same billet, who'd been here for a while, couldn't assist us, so we set out on our

own. We scouted all over town, and finally hit on some French baths. Quite a treat. Each Joe got a private dressing room & bath. The Army uses showers exclusively; this was the first time I'd used a bathtub in about two years. And try to tell us it wasn't the next best thing to being home! The guy that invented hot water deserves a vote of confidence from us. And when it was all over, they needled us for only 10 francs - that's 20¢ in your money. In some ways, mom, the prices of things over here are amazing. Some people work for only 18 francs/day. Beer is about 5¢ a glass. And haircuts rate 10 francs. In Belgium they're even cheaper - and a shave there nets 3 francs - 6¢. Still & all, you may pay \$1.20 for a radio that'd cost 15 samoliens in the States. And the pad of paper (about 100 sheets) that I'm writing on set me back 70 cents. Things just don't seem to be consistent.

3 January.

Today I got 3 pkgs & a stack of mail. You, Anne & Kate figure in the boxes - but all of them were in pretty miserable shape. A jar of pickles you enclosed in yours had broken, and all I could salvage was the orange juice, cheese, a little candy, and 1 pkg of dehydrated soup. But even so, I were promised a nice feed with that food & the crabmeat, tuna fish & vienna sausage Anne sent. Kate sent crackers & candy. And Anne sent a lot of candy, too.

Right now there's a mound of the stuff on the table. I wonder how well I'll ever eat it all. One afforded the best solution to our most pressing need - cigarettes. She sent 3 packs - and they were like manna from heaven after a week of opening the dry units in C-rations to get at the 3 stale weeds you get in every 3rd can. Relief is in sight however. We expect to have 2 weeks rations brought down to us tomorrow. That should amount to around 10 packs - and be enough to last us till next week's rations arrive.

Among the letters & cards I received was a damn nice one from the Chief. I say "one", since it was neither a letter nor a card, but a combination of both. I got one of the biggest kicks out of reading it that I've ~~ever~~ ever gotten out of mail in the E.T.O. I'm really glad he wrote - but am now half-afraid of coming home and professing to know something about photography. I can see that the Chief & Tommy are fast surpassing my limited accomplishments in that field. On that subject by the way, I've kicked myself many a time for not having brought Joe's camera over with me. - The Chief's description of a night at home seemed to bring 244 here to France for a few minutes. Perhaps he should have been a novelist.

Conley, Aikens, and Ray & Kitty sent Christmas cards. And Leg, her Aunt Ann, Betty & Joe, letters. Tell Bert I'll try to get a line off to her soon. Joe wrote just before he left

Charlotte for Florida! Am anxious to know what his trip brings in the way of new & interesting things. Was really surprised to hear of Mary Salerno's new vocation. More power to her; she's a good kid.

Having been so lax in my letter-writing recently, I am now confronted with an astounding number of "musts" that I'll have to get off soon to Dot, Joe, Conley, etc. Auntie must be wondering if I've forgotten her.

In my last letter to you, mom, I mentioned that I'd received a bit of mail, but was unable to comment on it at the time. Well, that mail was written on the 24th of Sept & the 1st of Oct. It seemed very strange to read about events that were then very big in all our lives. Almost like ancient history. But good. — I wonder though, just where you got all your info. You're wrong, incidentally, about the location of that hotel — sooo, Tommy was backing up the wrong tree.

When you wrote that letter on the 24th I was making a tour of English USO's after having attended Mass at the Oratory of St Philip Neri — Cardinal Newman's Church. Later on we scouted through Piccadilly & Oxford Circles & took in "The Seventh Cross" at an English theatre.

Can still remember we had a big feed of Turkey that Sunday for noon chow. But it all seems like ages ago! — Would like to see that new dining room some you mention. We really needed it. — Still ~~have~~ Malone's 50¢ piece — don't expect to meet up with him for a little while. — You ask, mom, a lot of questions which unfortunately I won't be able to answer as long as I'm over here. But the answers will keep. And I'll be only too ~~ex~~ eager to do a lot of talking when I get home.

The New Year entered silently here. The Jerries were the only ones making any noise that was disagreeable. New Year's Eve 4 of us spent imbibing about \$2.40 per-man's-worth of cognac & weak beer, and in singing songs. Got home just in time to beat the curfew & get a good night's sleep. In all it was a sober, rather quiet celebration. I hope we can make next year's as loud & long as we like — providing La G. doesn't object!

Well, folks, gotta work a little tonight so I'll knock off in favor of 40 winks. I hope the Holidays treated you all well. And that Jack Benny will ride again.

Love, as ever,

Frank.

Return

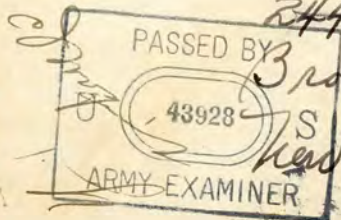
5.00 five
2.25 dinner
1.26 cigars
7.51

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Mrs. Frank J. Shields
244-87th Street
Brooklyn 9
New York



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