

Letter #132

(1)
'Somewhere in Holland,'
Sunday - 18 Mar 45

Dear Alice, Mother, & Gang,

Having the time, the inclination, and something to write about, I will see what I can do about bringing you up to date, on things, with me. - Had a most interesting day of entertainment, yesterday. Went into Germany, and saw a U.S.O. camp show, the best I've seen yet. The star, was the Metropolitan's coloratura-soprano, Lily Pons. There was an orchestra made up from four bands and orchestras, (G.I.), and directed by Andre Kostelnetz. Both her singing and the music, was wonderful. I've never seen any type of entertainment receive such an ovation, much less operatic selections. She sang six songs: 'The blue Danube', 'Estrellita', 'Ave Maria', 'Summertime', and two others, the titles of which, I can't spell. The orchestra played many selections, including: 'Star-Dust', 'Under the Double Eagle', 'Begin the Beguine', 'Rhapsody in Blue', and

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selections from Victor Herbert. I had my camera along, and took one picture inside the theater. I don't think I was in a good place to take picture, but I thought it was worth gambling one exposure on. There were two sound-cameras set up in the theater taking pictures, so you may get to see them in some news-reel, sometime. I also had my picture taken a few weeks ago, while we were riding tanks, and taking an enemy held town. Haven't seen Louis Steinberg since then. I have no idea where those pictures will appear, so keep your eyes open. For further entertainment, yesterday, I went to the G.I. theater, and for the third or fourth time, saw Bing Crosby, in, 'Going My Way'. He's still my favorite, and I enjoyed it just as much this time, as the first. - Frank Birchall's letter of Valentine's Day, asks 'how come no comment on France'? I thought I had expressed my opinion of it, in a previous letter; but I can sum it up,

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in a very few words. It stinks, at least what I have seen of it. I didn't see Paris, which, from all reports, is quite a place. I was in the outskirts, for a couple of hours one foggy morning before Christmas, while touring the country by rail, in the famous 'forty + eight'. I landed, Dec. 15th, at Le Havre that was before the port was repaired, and the docks usable. We were landed on the beach, by LST's, from the English boat that brought us across the channel. The town was in pretty bad shape. It had been taken by the Canadians, and between the aerial bombings, and assault by naval guns, it was completely flattened in the section by the waterfront. Block after block, of what had been four and five story buildings, levelled to a mass of rubble. My other stops, there, in places that you will have heard of, included, Fontaine-Bleau, Nancy, Metz, and Neuf-Chateau. The country as a whole, seems to be pretty run-down, which is to be expected, after the years of German occupation. Except in the central parts, of the

larger cities, all of the population, have a barn built right into the house, with a door leading from the kitchen, into the cow's quarters. They keep an assortment of live stock, which as an average example seems to include, two cows, a pig, a goat, a dozen chickens, with maybe a couple of ducks or geese, a dog, and an assortment of cats. The streets are narrow, and full of sharp turns, that is, in the smaller villages. The building fronts, are either right on the streets, or very close to them. And every front yard is adorned with a manure pile. You can imagine the smells that must naturally go with a set-up like that. In Belgium and Luxembourg, things were somewhat the same, but generally cleaner. They have their manure piles either beside the house, behind it, or in a nearby field. Holland seems to be the nicest of them all, the people are always cleaning something, they're sweeping the dirt roads, scrubbing their

sidewalks, window-sills or building. I imagine now that the Jervies are gone, they will be able to put things in better shape, and keep them that way. One thing though, here, as in Scotland, England, and everywhere else we go, we are haunted all the time by countless kids. "Cigarettes for Papa," is the first English phrase they learn. That, and, "Have you any chocolate?" In England, it was, "Any gum, chum?" Whenever we have chow, they are around like so many flies, with cans, pitchers, and dishes, waiting for whatever they can get. You have to feel sorry, for them. If you give one of the little imps of eight or ten, a cigarette for papa, as soon as you turn your back, he smokes it himself, and lets the old man scratch for himself. When you walk down the streets, the kids run after you, and give you their best sales-talk, hanging on your hands and clothes, and looking at you with a look that makes you feel sorry

for them. They look undernourished, and pale, and for the most part are quite skinny. The same goes largely for the adult population. The Germans really kept them clamped down. When we rode into towns and liberated them, the civilian population literally danced in the streets, waving their arms, and jumping up and down, and asked for cigarettes and chocolate. Here in Holland, there are a lot of English speaking people, I don't know how come, but it is easier for us to make ourselves understood, than it was in other countries. I interrupted this letter, in the middle of this page, for chow, which, this noon, consisted of fried chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy, string beans, cherries, bread & coffee. Yesterday we had pork chops at noon, and roast beef for supper. All that, and no worry about ration points; you see, there are some advantages in being in the army, after all. - Of the film that came with my camera, so far I have

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used one roll, and three exposures of the second. I've already sent the one roll in for developing, and will see how long it takes, for me to get them back. Yesterday's mail, brought me three more Christmas cards; from the Rosenberg family, Eileen & John Leides, and Pvt. Fred Russell, my Texas friend, who took basic training with me, at Camp Robinson. They were all addressed to APO-129, back in England. In England, at Warminster, I used APO-15485, at Coddford, 129, and at Tidworth, 551. I still get mail from all three, in groups of two to ten at a time. I see by the calendar, that another five days will see me a year in the army. I'm ready to retire, any time now, and go back to worrying about gas rationing, points, and what-not. I've been waiting a long time for some pictures, which were mailed to my last fall. I have received some, more recent ones, lately, but would like to know what

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happened to the others. These people that handle the mail, don't care what they do with other people's things, sometimes. — I'm just about run down, and if I don't stop soon, I'll have to use two envelopes. The censoring officer, has already remarked about how much I write. — With that I will close, hoping that this finds you all in good health and so forth, and hoping to hear from you, from time to time, I remain,

As ever,
Johnny

P.S.)

Am enclosing 1 of our divisional Christmas cards, which I saw, for the first time, today.

W

Johnny

Letter #182 (Private)

(9)

'Holland,'

18 Mar 45

Dearest Alice,

Your letter #83, makes me slightly unhappy, in places where you refer to things which I said was to be a closed subject with me. I repeat, as I have said so, often, don't let your imagination run away with you. Whenever you see some sort of proof, start worrying; until then, don't go out of your way looking for trouble. Enough said, I hope. - So they changed the Green Mill around. How about that guy, with his string of beads, is he still there? - Yes, you had mentioned the Governor's calling you, during one of his sprees, but that was the first time I had heard how he found out I was overseas. If my mother wrote about that, the letter hasn't reached me, as yet. - Glad to hear that my letters are reaching you quite regularly, and in order. I don't know, but I imagine that those that

are late, were sent regular mail, or perhaps
 V-mail. - No, Rackett is not the lad from
 Texas, he is the college graduate from
 Louisiana, whom I met in England. We
 went to London on pass together, last
 Thanksgiving. He is now in the same com-
 pany with me, but in a different platoon.
 Fred Russell is the one who was in the hospi-
 tal, in Camp Robinson, when I finished basic
 training. - That's about it for this time, so
 I will close, and give my writer's-cramped
 fingers a rest. I've been nearly five hours,
 with interruptions of course, on these ten
 pages. - Hoping this finds you okay, and,
 that you stop worrying about things that
 don't warrant it. Missing you more
 than you seem to realize, I remain,

As ever,

Your loving husband,
 Johnny

#182

March 18

Recd

April 2nd. 1945