

Pfc. John H. Ryan 36957 996
Co 'K' 320th Infantry
17 PO-35 - 70 PM. N.Y., N.Y.



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VIA AIR MAIL

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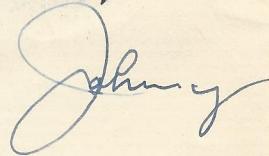
Ober Bieber, Germany
Monday-11 June 1945

Dear Alice, Mother, and Gang,

It is now 7:30 PM, and I am prepared to spend the rest of the night, and part of the morning, if necessary, on this letter. Today's mail, brought me a V-mail from Max, and a package from the Frank Andersons. I still have those to acknowledge, as well as most of my yesterdays mail, but am postponing that in favor of this, tonight. The package, incidentally, arrived in good condition. I have been more fortunate than most of the fellows, in that respect. Some of the stuff that comes in, is so badly beat up, that it's a wonder it gets here at all.--- We had a fancy formal affair here today. One of the Sgts in our company, was decorated, with the Distinguished Service Medal. it was presented by Brigadier General Fuchs, commanding general of the Third Corps Artillery, for an action on the 29th of last December, in Luxembourg, while we were with the Third Army.--- Well, we're really going, 'garrison', in great style now. We were issued neck-ties, today, which we will wear at all times when we are away from our quarters. The wool OD's, aren't enough, we have to wear halters, too. It's a great life, first we come over and try to shoot them all, and now we have to dress to make a good impression on what's left of them. However, I'd much rather be putting up with this kind of crap, than be fighting Japs, so I'll take it just as long as they dish it out, and like it.--- They've been discharging these German PW's, in droves. They're all over, just like flies, still wearing their uniforms, walking, riding bicycles, pulling carts, and riding trucks. Again I say it's a great life. While guarding a bridge, at Irlich, I probably checked passes of some of the same Krauts who were shooting at me, east of the Elbe River, some five weeks ago.--- Am enclosing some snapshots, all that I have so far to show for some fourteen rolls of film I have used up. These are the most recent ones. The earlier ones, which I started taking in March, are somewhere in the hands of the Signal Corps. We are now doing our own developing and printing, within the company; having accumulated enough equipment from the different places we've stopped.--- I have acquired another camera, a Zeiss Ikon. It is a plate type affair, and if it turns out as well as I expect it to, I think I will have something. I have also acquired some plates for it, and have taken some portrait shots with them, but don't as yet know how they turned out. They're supposed to be developed tomorrow, and if it works out as usual, they will probably be ready in a week or so.--- I have written a little descriptive ^{note} on the backs of the snaps, to give me some reminders, so that when I get home and start shooting the bull about how I won the war, I can have some references.--- Things have been going quietly, recently; did have a little excitement the other night, though, and all strictly GI. We are, as I understand, and have good reason to believe, in the heart of the wine country. The other night, shortly after midnight, while I was on guard at the bridge, bullets started whizzing overhead. I hit the dirt, and was all set for a counter-attack.

But, that was unnecessary. From the story we got from the MP's, a little later; it seems that there were several GI's up the road who had been indulging in wine, and trying to make their way back to their quarters. They hailed an army truck, for a ride, and the driver, seeing that they were drunk, didn't stop. That, apparently, hurt their feelings, so they opened up on the truck with their rifles. The two of us, at the bridge, just happened to be in the line of fire, but, fortunately, no one was hit, so everything turned out okay. The MP's were good Joes, and instead of arresting the drunks, they took them where they belonged, so they wouldn't get into any more trouble, and everybody was happy. Things like that, once in awhile, keep things from getting dull.-- I don't know just how much longer I am going to be able to write, tonight. We bought a barrel of beer for the squad, and things are getting noisy around here. Fifty-five litres of beer for 12 men, is quite a bit. It is 10% beer, and tastes more like real beer, than anything I've tasted since I've been overseas. The number of mistakes that this typewriter is making, proves that the stuff is potent. It doesn't cost much to get a snout-full, Fifty-five litres, cost from thirty-five to forty marks, (three and a half, to four dollars).-- Wine is plentiful, too, we get it in five gallon cans, which cost from forty to fifty marks. There are two kinds available; this white Riesling or Rhein wine, and a red kind, both of which are capable of helping one forget one's troubles, and bringing about a good headache, the morning after.-- I'm eating olives from the Anderson's, drinking beer, and cussing this Nazi typewriter, for not writing correctly.-- It is now past 1:00 A.M.; two hours have elapsed since the previous sentence was completed, and it is long past the time that I should have been in bed.-- So, for the present, I will close hoping that this finds you all in good health, and so forth, I remain,

As ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John" or "Johnny".