

# World War II Letters Of Gordon Jones Flenniken



Early Photograph after entering Army Air Corps, Sep 8, 1942.

*These selected letters are from over 300 that my father-in-law, Gordon Jones Flenniken, wrote to his sweetheart and later wife, Helen Bryans, during the period June 1943 thru Jan 1946.*

*Gordon was enrolled in the ASTP – Army Specialized Training Program –on 12 June 1943. He already had two years college from Texas Tech where he studied Petroleum Engineering and this program was supposed to complete his degree in engineering. He was promised to come out of it as a commissioned officer. BUT – the program was abruptly cancelled in March 1944 shortly before he could complete the program.*

*He was then assigned to the 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, 409<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment and sent to Camp Howze, Texas for combat training. From there he was sent to Camp Shanks, New York and then shipped to Marseille France about September 1944. He was in France, Germany and Austria from September 1944 to January 1946.*

*All of the letters are excerpted, cutting out the personal love story.*

# 1943

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**NOTE – This letter was one of the earliest ones where he is explaining about the new ASTP. “Paris” here is referring to Paris, Texas.**

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8 June 1943  
Dearest Helen

Sunday Night

We arrived in Paris about one o'clock Saturday and came directly here. We are a temporary camp that is really a Jap Prison Camp. Yesterday late the ASTP was explained to us, and this morning we were interviewed and assigned to different classes. I am to go in at the third year college level to study Mechanical Engineering and I will retain my rating. Chuck and Darold are going in at first year College level and will be reduced to Privates. In a few days we will be sent to colleges all over the country, where we get two years education crammed into nine months. I will get a B.S. degree and be assigned back to the Air Corps (possibly PAAF) with either a commission or MSgt rating.

The weather here is terrible. You take a shower and five minutes later you need another. Our bags haven't arrived yet and we are rapidly getting dirty. Went to town today but were so disgusted, came back.

There are 70,000 soldiers at Camp Maxey – 2 miles from us – with only 15,000 population in town. They are all artillery, engineers, and infantry, so really miss the planes and you. The more I think about our short relationship, the more I believe a miracle has happened. I am so lonesome for you it hurts and hope to see you again someday. Please write, will send new address soon. All my love – Gordon.

10 June 1943  
Dearest,

Thursday Night

Pushing a pen is just about all I am capable of doing tonight. Yesterday we went on a five mile hike – at attention, and this afternoon we marched eight; besides our usual hour of calisthenics, drill, obstacle course, and hand to hand combat. Today a boy broke his back and another sprained his leg. The first fell off the rope ladder. The Colonel was there and when we came to the ropes that you swing across the creek on, he had to put his two cents in. Instead of grabbing the rope that hangs over the middle of the water, we had to run and jump & then grab it, our momentum carrying us on over. This kid missed the rope, and banged into the opposite bank which is built up with logs. Everyday about ten fall in the river. It is so hot here that I think most of them do it on purpose. We go to work at 5:30 in the morning in the hot sun, and don't get a drink of water until noon. We are out doors all day long. Remember how we used to gripe about one hour's P.T. in Pampa? We are getting fourteen hours of it here a day. We will all be glad when our shipping orders come out & we expect them within a few days. No joke, the boys here are begging for K.P. so they won't have to work so hard.

Don't believe I am beefing. I would gladly pay far more to finish college than the price they are asking here. Also, I have always wanted an opportunity to get in shape physically & you know this is the only way that can be accomplished – by force....



ASTP  
ASTU 3890

17 June 1943  
Dearest Helen,

Thursday Night

Arrived here this morning at 4:20 & got a couple hours sleep before finding out just what the score it. We are living in a brand new dormitory, two to a room. We begin a very rigorous scholastic & military schedule July 12.

Our work begins at 5:55 & we are not off until 11:30 P.M. We get 24 hours a week class work, 24 hours compulsory study, 5 hours Military Science, & 6 hours physical tng. Our only time off is from Saturday at 6:30 P.M until 8:30 PM Sunday. I will finish the equivalent of the last two college years of Mech engineering in the next 9 months, & probably get a commission within 3 months after that.

I have to write about ten letters tonight so will stop here – write me above address as it is permanent – goodnight my sweet – as ever, Gordon

***[NOTE – In this letter he is giving a little biography of his life to his future wife, Helen. They only had two dates when they met at Pampa Army Air Field (Texas) in June 1943, before he went to College Station, Texas A&M. Their courtship was through their letters.]***

2 July 1943

...I was born (that's the way most people start out, I think) December 26, 1921 in Shreveport, La. My father, (I call him Guy, or Dad) was in the contracting and building business with his Dad. They were rather successful, but had the age old urge to pioneer. I don't believe Mother and Mam-ma (that's my grandmother) agreed totally on the fundamental methods of raising children, so my Dad gathered up his small family – I had a little brother by this time, and moved to Texas. He rather overdid it, as he didn't stop until he came to a little hole in the road called Whiteface. There, he attempted to install his urban ideas – set up what he called the "Whiteface Coal and Grain Co."

He lost money rapidly, so my Grandfather (Papa) decided Dad needed the benefit of his (Papa's) business experience. He then proceeded to move to Whiteface where he built a brick hotel – a very imposing sight in the middle of a Texas Prairie. This is where two very successful business men really slipped up. They lost all they had. Then we came to Lubbock. Dad had long been interested in automobiles, had even sold them for a while – owned the first one in Baton Rouge – so he went to work in an automobile parts store. Since then he has risen to district manager of the largest automobile parts firm in this section of the country. He is the most successful salesman I have ever seen, due mainly to his ability to make and hold friends. I have gloried in his reputation for years, for my first name is the same as his.

My family began with practically nothing in Lubbock and I am far from ashamed of the position it now holds there. I started to school there, graduating as third highest in the class of '39. I played in the bands there ever since 1935, and have naturally cultivated an appreciation for beautiful music. This I will never regret. From there I went to Texas Tech in Lubbock until 1941 – studying Petroleum Engineering – and was the first drummer in the Tech Concert Band. I quit school in 1941, for no particular reason other than I thought I could have a better time, make my own money, etc. At the time, I was working part time for Roy Furr (Furr Food Stores) and when I quit school, stepped into a full time job. It didn't take me long to realize my mistake, but I was still unable to convince myself that I should finish my education. When I joined a Fraternity (**KKΨ**) [*NOTE – Kappa Kappa Psi – Honorary Band Fraternity*] I quickly picked up the Joe College habits of smoking, drinking, and loafing in general, and when I quit school, I was nearer being an atheist than anything. I imagine my Dad was thoroughly disgusted with his wayward offspring, but he was tolerant, as most good Dads are.

I knew if I didn't return to school that at least I should try to learn a job that would allow me to eventually become self-sufficient – so my Dad got me one (at a large salary reduction) in a friend's automobile parts store. I quickly became very interested in this job, as now I could talk "shop" with Dad. It has always been his and my desire that we go in business ourselves someday.

I had learned to fly while in Tech my last year, and this had fairly gotten into my blood. I had fifty hours light planes – and would have given my right arm to fly for Uncle Sam – I was color blind. About this time I became conscious that we were at war. I could not quite relinquish

the idea of flying – so tried to get in the Naval Air Corps, Marine & Royal Canadian. I was turned down in all. I even volunteered as a Class A glider pilot & was sent to Randolph Field last July 4<sup>th</sup> – my chest was ¼” too small. I came home very much disappointed in life. I began eating & sleeping right, trying to get into top physical condition – before I decided to try again. In the mean time I volunteered for Air Corps O.C.S. [*Officer Candidate School*] Armament Training which was open at that time – my grade average (B-) in college was too low. All this time my draft date was creeping up on me. So many boys had volunteered for the Air Corps, cadet – that it was closer than I realized, forty-eight hours before it hit, I enlisted in the Air Corps as a Private, in desperation.

I was supposed to have been returned from the Reception Center at Ft Sill, Ok. to Lubbock Army Flying School [*L.A.F.S.*]. Eighty-one of us were sent to Camp Luna, Las Vegas, New Mexico by mistake. Here I became a member of the 95<sup>th</sup> A.A.F. [*Army Air Force*] Band – which two months later became famous as the official Air Transport Command Band, by order of Gen. George. I was very proud to be a charter member of such a fine organization. We had an 85 piece band that would compare with the Army, Navy, or Marine Bands. Then, they found me – five months later – and I was returned to L.A.F.S., and assigned to the band there. They had too many men – so nine of us – you remember some of them --- Fish, Hartwell, Gentry, Ingalls, Goff & Butterbaugh, came to Pampa as a cadre to form the 385<sup>th</sup>. This proved to be rather a successful venture. I was very happy there as we had a very smooth running organization – due to a very young C.O. and a darn swell bunch of fellows.

From there on you know my story. I made 151 on the A.G.C.T. [*Army General Classification Test*] and guess that someday I intended to apply for O.C.S. but it was so pleasant to have a responsible job and just coast. Now, I know that I would never have been truly happy just coasting.

That is all – except that while I was in Pampa I met the sweetest girl in all the world – thank God for not breaking the chain of my life that led me to you, Darling – I pray to God that he never break the chain that would lead me away from you – Please tell me about you, now – I love you sweetheart, Gordon.

21 July 1943

Wednesday Morning

Good morning dearest

We are getting the back lash from a hurricane brewing down in Galveston. I slept like a log last night, partially due to the cool weather, but mainly because it was raining. There is nothing quite so pleasant as sleeping in a slow drizzling rain – or do you think so?

Time doesn't seem to stand around for me anymore. It seems that I have just started, but have practically finished analytics. I am really enjoying the work here. It is something real, something you can grasp – and the spirit of competition is deeply grooved into our daily lives.

Once I was highly dissatisfied – as you put it, life seemed so futile. Then, the only real enjoyment was contemplation of the future. Now, I am content with everything. There is always the difference of tomorrow, but, there is also the happiness of today, the pleasantness of yesterday's memories.

Something in my basic makeup is undergoing a major change. Perhaps it is love – I am quite sure it is. Certainly nothing else could make one overlook the insignificant troubles one has daily, make him see things with a deeper sense of appreciation.

Darling, the things we have to talk about will require a lifetime – I must go to class – bye for now, I love you, Gordon  
No P.T. this morning – it's still raining, so will add a little to this. No letter from you this morning – don't be so cruel. Mother sent the Sunday paper – no news, except my very best friend won the DFC [*Distinguished Flying Cross*] for sinking a Jap battleship in a Marine Dive Bomber. This makes



me very proud. It was I who got him interested in flying – we flew together & got our certificates at the same time. I even did his homework in Meteorology because he could not understand Physics. We volunteered for the Naval Air Corp together – I was color-blind. He was the top ranking man in his class at Corpus Christi & was chosen for the Marine Air Corps – the best in the world.

At times I am still remorseful that I too could not have gone. Flying is in my blood, now and will be forever, I guess.

We are going under a new TOS tomorrow. Rumor has it that our future will be far less pleasant. I think the lieutenant sits around thinking up new formalities. For instance, we will have to get permission to leave our dormitory at any time other than scheduled classes, and will have to have permission to visit another room at night, & then only to study. That hour was entirely too short – I still love you, though. Gordon

***[NOTE – After corresponding from June 1943, Gordon and Helen were married in October 1943 in his hometown of Lubbock Texas. He still has to live at the college but sees Helen on weekends – she has moved to Bryan Texas which is only about 5 miles from College Station. She works in Civilian Personnel at Bryan Army Air Field.]***



# 1944

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**NOTE – This was Gordon’s first letter written after he reached Camp Howze. His camp life is definitely a different experience than he had at school. He kept his rank as Sgt.**

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24 March 1944

Hi Baby

I’ve been intending to wire you ever since I arrived – but first one thing and then another has kept me from it. Arrived in Ft Worth about 8 am – had breakfast en masse, called Lucille. She hasn’t received our letter. Arrived Gainesville - about one pm after sweating out a lot of switching and waiting.

A bunch of Infantry officers jumped on the train – one gave us each a tag – we put our name & ASN on it & tied it to a button – another checked our name on a list & assigned us to Co’s in different regiments. We were all pretty well split up – 3 or 4 in each Co. G.I. trucks to Camp – about 4 miles. It’s big as hell – scattered all over everywhere – home of the 4<sup>th</sup> Army (103, 102, 104) div. – some artillery outfit & a bunch of 8<sup>th</sup> S.C. [*Service Command*]. Unloaded & marched to our various areas.

A Cpl gave me a rather thorough interview – bed & helmet liner. The CO [*Commanding Officer*] is out on a week’s problem – be back Sunday. A skeleton crew is here & I have found out I have an excellent chance of keeping my rating.

I reported for a physical exam this morning – nothing to it. A Major examined my eye & sent me over to a Lt. Col. at the Sta. hosp. He put something in it & I am to go back Mon. – he says it will be ok – probably take a few weeks to get back to normal. It doesn’t hurt - & seems quite a bit better. There are about 1600 ASTP boys here – we are to get 3 wks basic training & then be assigned to the regular co.

Saturday morning.

Last night we made the infiltration course – quite different. We crawled about a hundred yds flat on our faces dragging a rifle & steel helmet. They were firing tracers about 18 in. above the ground & you sure did hug the ground. Land mines kept booming & they threw mud all over us. We had to roll over on our backs & crawl through a lot of barbed wire – some fun. I’m tired and sore as the devil.

Going out with the ASTP Co this morning – will let you know all about it. I like it, kinder. The boys that are running the outfit seem to be pretty swell fellows. Don’t worry about me, darling. I’ll hold my own. Keller is in another Co. – we try to get together at nite & see what’s cooking.

Just signed the payroll – should be paid the 31<sup>st</sup>. Sorry if I forgot to kiss you goodnight – I love you, always believe that. No passes for 3 wks, but maybe I can meet you in Dallas after that. I don’t think there’s any immediate worry of shipping.

... Be good & take care of yourself sweetheart – I love you most best. See you again tonight, darling - Flen I

27 March 1944

My Precious

Forgive me for my lack of writing. I’ve missed you so darn much I could taste it. I have thought of you constantly – God, sweetheart, I love you so terribly much.

Monday morning

This place seems like the end of the world. I guess my string of good luck had to come to an end. We are so busy I haven't even had time for the most important thing in the world – writing to you.

You wouldn't know me now – they are trying to make an infantryman of me in three weeks. I think I left off with the infiltration course. We rode out in trucks – fatigues, leggings, steel helmet & rifle & for thirty minutes practiced getting in and out of the trucks by command. After a while it got very dark & they led us about a hundred yards in front of six machine guns into a ditch. At a signal we went over the top & crawled or rather wriggled toward the guns, dragging the rifle over our wrist. They fired tracers about six or eight inches above us, which we squirmed the hundred yds thru barbed wire & holes. I was scared as hell. We had to roll over on our backs to get thru the wire & every few seconds a bunch of tracers whizzed right above your face. Land mines kept exploding around us & threw mud all over everyone. That was finally over & every button was open.

Saturday, I was assigned to a training regiment & spent all day dry firing the M1. We also had bayonet practice. This is quite a bit like fencing, only the object is quite different. We are taught to growl & sneer when we lunge – I'll bet you would be scared to death.

At night, we have to get ready for the next day - clean our rifles – I'm just about able to take it apart now. It's a little worse than our .22.

Sunday morning we had breakfast at 5:30 & left the area at 6:30 with packs & rifles. Hiked 4 ½ miles to the range & fired all day long. I qualified for sharpshooter, even though my eye kept me from seeing exactly. We had a good hot meal in the field & church services.

We finished firing about six pm & hiked back to camp, cross country. Most of the way was weedy, plowed ground & we walked in ten inch mud a few times. I was never so utterly worn out in all my life. I spent the rest of the night cleaning everything up & oiling my rifle.

We were supposed to spend today & tomorrow on the range, but I had to report to the hospital for another look at my eye. The Col says it is better, but said it would take six more weeks to really tell. I am to go back next Monday. My vision is still slightly blurred – your Ray Bans are wonderful, I practically sleep with them. Such sacrifices on your part, continually show me just what a wonderful person my little wife is. Thank God for you.

My Co. went out at 6:30 again, so I went back to bed 'til 8. Boy, I was dead. Co G. returned Sunday & they have the day off. I am at present about 2 miles from there at the Service Club goofing off. It's 10:30 now, & I think I'll stay here 'til noon for lunch. Our Co. mess is lousy, but I love it. We are usually hungry as hell.

Well, I guess that brings us up to date. We "Aggies" try to get together at night for a couple of beers. We are scattered all over the place. Some of us are in rifle co's – heavy weapons, medics, etc. John Keller & I are in the same Regt – he's in A Co. and I'm in G.

The fellows in my Co. that I have met seem pretty nice. A few of them are ASTP refugees & got the same deal I did. I'm the only NCO that is new. They are very helpful – especially about showing me things about packs & rifles, etc. They all sympathize with me & none of them look down on the AAF. They show me the same respect they show the other non-coms. If I have half a chance to keep my rating, I'll work my head off. God knows a pvt in the Inf. isn't very damn much.

As yet I haven't met the C.O. [Commanding Officer] or 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt, but I hear they are swell fellows. I will probably talk to them this afternoon. We are too busy to become gloomy & I've got you & God – so don't worry about me Honey. Maybe, everything will work out. Perhaps I can see you in Dallas in a little while. Remember, you promised to tell me how everything goes. You know you can always have my shoulder for a good cry. I pray God every night to keep you from harm – Please, darling, let Flen know if you need me. I love you always – my darling – Flen

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**NOTE – His C.O. is Captain Roger Craddock, whom he has the misfortune of butting heads with later on.**

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30 May 1944

Tuesday afternoon

Hello my Butch,

It was a little cold in our tent last night – one blanket on the ground & one over us. The ground is pretty steep and I found myself half out of the tent this morning. Had a lengthy philosophical discussion with my tent mate – a lad from S. Carolina who can neither read nor write.

We had a good breakfast when it was barely light and then attended Memorial Services at 7. A “K” Co. boy drowned yesterday afternoon and they recovered his body about 9:30 last night. Every man attended this morning – rather touching.

We spent the morning making rafts out of truck covers & floating machine guns and mortars across the lake. (I waded a bit, not getting my trunks wet and slept awhile). I sting all over from the sun. Came back to area, cleaned and oiled weapons & got the tent tightened up just as it started raining – I’m dry as a bone, we’ll have to have us a pup tent. Just finished lunch, and full and sleepy. Really wish you were here – am enjoying my “vacation” immensely.

Think we’re invited to a dance across the lake tonight. Will probably be paid tomorrow and may go in Thursday nite. Will wire money as soon as possible. Will call if I can come to Bryan – will not if I want you to meet me in Dallas. Give Gotha my love – I love you, Flen dearest, Flen.

6 June 1944

Tuesday evening

Flen dear,

Today ain’t so bad. The POR men left this morning – we spent the balance of the morning doing our usual routine – drill, bayonet, and a lecture on artificial respiration. Had a shakedown locker inspection by Capt Craddock – we think he was looking for live ammunition. The entire afternoon was spent sketching terrain features. My work may sound interesting, but it is so elementary I find it quite boring.

Tonight we scrubbed and re-arranged the hutment. I was moved to the 1<sup>st</sup> squad as squad leader which calls for Staff. A platoon from G. Co. was made up tonight – including practically all non-coms. We are going to Dallas June 15<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) put on a demonstration for the civilians. The 15<sup>th</sup> has been designated Infantry Day. This Platoon is supposed to be a crack outfit – I’m an acting Pvt in the team and have to demonstrate the bazooka. We work from 3 ‘til 8 and are free until 11:30 – sleep in tents in a park and come back Friday night (16 June)

We are taking a bayonet team, rough and tumble team, light and heavy machine gun and mortar sections – 75 and 105 artillery pieces, communications team and complete field kitchen. We will prepare supper and eat so the civilians can see how we do it. Boy, I’ll bet we have T-bone steaks and ice cream.

13 June 1944

Tuesday evening

Darling –

Gosh, you must have quit writing last week – I haven’t had a letter yet. Guess I’m more or less PO tonight. You know – the old cycle. I had a big run in with the S/Sgt today. We were running a problem – squad attack – lots of double time etc and one of the new kids passed out. Well, I ran up to him and was trying to help him when Sgt Parton came up and told me to leave him alone and stuck his rifle in the ground, hung a helmet on it and called him a casualty. Damn it anyway. He contends that since we are here – we are all physical equals and that the only way a man will fall out is to goldbrick. Well, he ranks me, I’ll do my duty, but that’s all – to hell



with it. I'm just about fed up. If it weren't for you I would have revolted long ago and tossed the damn stripes in. Twenty-eight dollars helps out a little though. Guess maybe I can keep my head....

# The Dallas Morning News

DALLAS, TEXAS, FRIDAY, JUNE 16, 1944



**DEADLY BAZOOKA**—Even a child can handle a bazooka, the American wonder weapon that knocks out tanks, these helmeted soldiers of the 409th Infantry demonstrated at Fair Park Thursday. The boy holding up the bazooka barrel is Herbie Haught, 3614 Oak Lane, while his sister Annette loads. Showing Herbie how to hold the barrel is Sgt. Gordon J. Flenniken, Lubbock. Beside the girl is Sgt. Al Staniec, Syracuse, N.Y.

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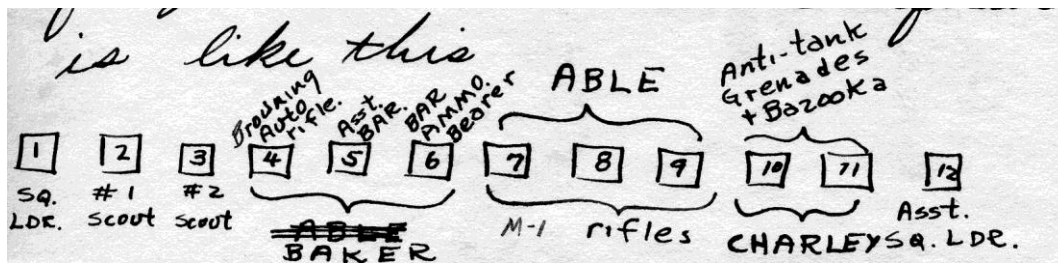
28 June 1944

Wednesday eve

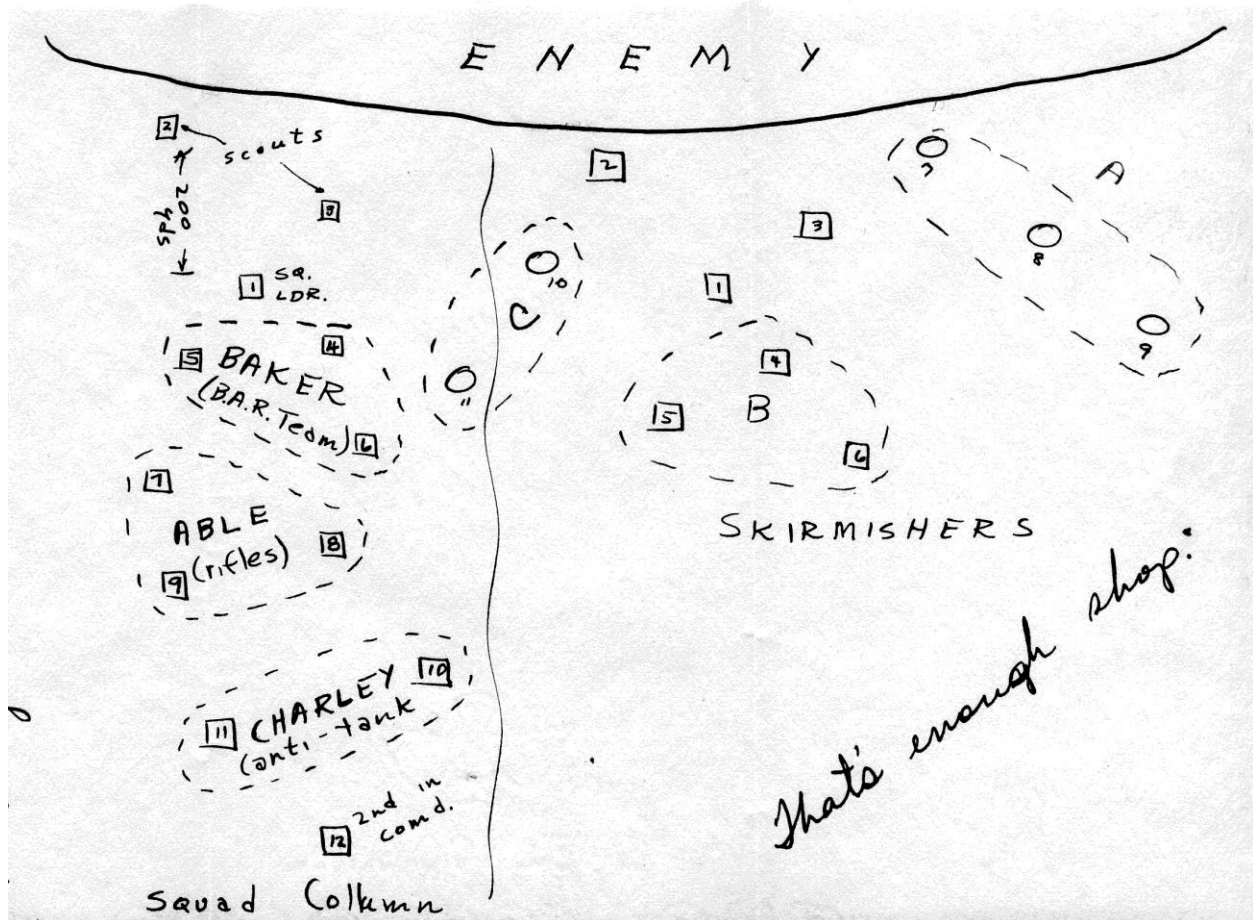
My baby,

I'm right in the middle of the local U.S.O. (useless soldier's outpost). They have a beautiful collection of records – and right now I'm sweating out the machine. Think I'll play a little Victor Herbert and the love song from Scheherazade that you like.

Monday the Infantry made a drastic change. The squad was formed into 3 teams – Able, Baker and Charley. This gives much better control – all this week is being spent teaching and learning new tactical formations. May I talk shop a minute? Forgive me – Well the squad is like this:



I devote this page to formations. Purely for my scrapbook as I know you aren't interested.



I got my OCS blanks tonight but, I'm going to be a little selfish. I hope you won't hate me for this – but I'm going to try for a transfer to ASF. There's a good possibility of landing a city police desk job. I won't present any arguments. It's non-combatant – pays \$5.00 per day subsistence – 8 hours a day and all night with you. Hell – why not take it if I can get it. Someone else will and anyway, I've been told my flat feet would never get by a POE inspection, so I'm spinning my wheels training as I am now. I'll probably have some info Saturday. Hope it works. Don't blame me too much, hon. I wanted to fly – I tried my damndest and since then the army has shoved me around quite a bit...All my devotion – FLEN I

***[NOTE – In July on one of their training “problems” Gordon was the Squad Leader. A couple of guys slipped off. When the C.O. (Craddock) asked Gordon if he knew where they were, he merely said, “No Sir” – because he didn’t know WHERE they were, but he knew they were gone and had sent people out looking for them. When Gordon tried to explain the situation later to Capt Craddock, Gordon got a little too “passionate” and was busted down to PFC. This hurt his morale deeply, but after the initial shock, he was back to giving 100%.]***

***[NOTE – This was the last letter written from Camp Howze, Texas.]***

20 September 1944  
Darling Flen

Wednesday evening

As usual it’s late as the devil and I’m tired. Been on all sorts of details today. Scrubbed for the last time. We pitched tents this morning. You won’t hear from me for a few days – so I’d better tell you I love you several times. I couldn’t call you this afternoon because everyone else was trying to place calls. I tried for three hours to call Mother and Dad tonight, and finally gave up. I just finished washing all the clothes I had on – hope they are dry in the morning. If I possibly can, I plan to call you in the morning. I would just like to hear your precious voice again. I will get along fine, so don’t worry. I’ll write everyday and hope you will too. I have absolutely everything I need.

Honey, you know how much I miss you – love you. You must help me keep my chin up and I shall help you. Don’t worry, I’ll be okay – for you.

***[NOTE – The next day, September 21, 1944, the whole unit departed Camp Howze and arrived at Camp Shanks, New York three days later. “Personnel processing continued and unit equipment was loaded aboard ships. Finally, troops were loaded and we departed New York Harbor early the morning of 6 October. For most of us, this was our first live view of the Statue of Liberty.” (Craddock)]***

***[NOTE – The next letters were postmarked October 31, 1944 – His unit is now in France. Mail didn’t move every day and he didn’t date all the letters.]***

(undated) postmarked 31 Oct ‘44  
Precious Flen,

I have the tent all to myself, and I managed for a candle, so will write while I have the chance. No mail for the past three or four days – I should get a pile of it soon. McClurg and I went over to see the show tonight, and I had already seen it so came back. It was warm all day, no rain at all. We built a nice rock fireplace – put up a clothes line and washed all our dirty clothes in hot soapy water. You’ve heard of G.I. ingenuity...well we have it. When we got here there was nothing but a power line. Now we have tents all over the place in rows forming streets – mess tents – latrines screened and some roofed. Everyone scrambles for the packing crates and we have built stands for helmets making a portable bathroom. Incidentally, I need a mirror – preferably a round one you can hang up – if you haven’t sent the other stuff. We spent three days carrying rocks in our helmets (we use them for everything) and built a large rock floor in and in front of the kitchen. The chow is 100% better. We still don’t throw a damn thing away though. Had French toast (U.S. style) with syrup and apricots and corn beef hash and coffee. This morning – meat loaf, green beans, pears, bread, butter and coffee for lunch – hamburger patties, hot dogs, peaches, bread and coffee for supper. Today was the first day I actually filled up. We had retreat tonight – the band played, and it was quite like being back in the states. I really feel good tonight. Shaved and had another helmet bath after supper. Oh yeah, got my

hair cut today. You should see me, it's about a quarter of an inch long. Looks like hell, but I don't think I'll comb it again until I see you. It's much cleaner this way and no bother at all.

All the rest of the excess non-coms were busted yesterday – about seven of them I think; including a couple of old ones who slipped off to town and forgot to show up for reveille.

I think we will have showers in a few days and also move the kitchen into a wooden shack we have put up. Everything is better – not nearly so bad as it looked at first. Don't worry, Sweetheart, I am doing wonderfully well – never felt better in my life. I am learning rapidly how to live under these conditions – though I long constantly to be home with you...

The candle is about gone – also have to get up at 3:45. The whole Company is on a detail tomorrow – more "C" rations at noon. I will dream of you, sweet girl, and hold you close all night. Goodnight, Only Girl – FLEN.

(undated) postmarked 31 Oct 44

Darling Flen,

Yesterday morning we took a 4 hour hike in the nearby French countryside. Villages lie about every three or four miles apart – all the houses alike, built of stone with red tile roofs. Saw a few people – mostly old men, women and children. We climbed a cliff behind one village and had a beautiful view of a lake. The village was clustered about a huge rock that from a distance resembled an old medieval castle. There was a statue to the 1<sup>st</sup> War and a pretty little graveyard. We saw one old lady carrying a basket filled with loaves of bread and a bottle of wine.

Got back at noon for chow. The mess hall has been up two days, and the food is better, but meager. We have one slice of bread, some hash or stew, and a little jam and hot coffee. The coffee is wonderful. Last night we had an outdoor movie, but the sound didn't work, and it was too cold, so we left early.

This morning Sgt Whittington woke us up 2 hours too early, but he couldn't persuade anyone to get up. The tents are pretty warm at night – we sleep in our underclothes and socks, and huddle up together and cover with 4 blankets and our overcoats. Don't know what we'll do if it really gets cold. It has been raining steadily since breakfast – and we have been standing around a fire in our raincoats.

I broke the tent pole this morning, but made another one – and right now I am sitting inside my tent on my raincoat. All my equipment and blankets are piled at the back. If my feet were dry I would be more or less comfortable. I hope they don't call us out – it's still raining, and it's pretty cold. I'm wearing the muffler you gave me Christmas and it's really nice.

***[NOTE – November 1944 marked the first of the battles that the 103<sup>rd</sup> saw. There were only two letters from November.]***

19 November 1944 – Sunday eve

My Precious Flen

This is my first opportunity to write. So very, very much as happened since my last letter. I don't know just how much I can tell you. *[Here there is a sentence that has been blacked out.]* I am well – feel very good, but have seen some horrible things. I have had plenty to eat and managed to keep fairly warm and dry. It's quite a problem though. One night we hit water in our fox hole and slept in about three inches of mud. Some days it rained others it snowed and a very few were warm. It's a hell of an experience to lie in a hole all night with shells hitting near you every once in a while. I have been very lucky so far, though, because I know it could be a lot worse. Every night I thank God for seeing me safely through the day, and pray to him to guide me through the next. As yet I have known very little fear. I feel so much closer to God than I ever did before. I know that if I should die that while I did live, my life was very sweet. He has been so very kind to me. There is nothing lacking at all in my life – it is

complete. Therefore I have no regrets. I have placed my life in his hands – and somehow I feel that I will survive the ordeals we are going through now. I pray that He see fit to give us our day – and I know he hears them. I feel that much. I feel as you do that the love He created in us is for some ultimate purpose. It is so utterly perfect. I have come to love you tenfold since we have been separated. No matter where I place my head at night, I can feel your dear nearness. We are so far apart, yet so very close. You are a part of me, you know. I can shut my eyes and feel your hand in mine – your lips – and hair. God, Flen, I miss you and love you. I could spend years and years just milling over the precious memories of you and me. And then sometimes as a sort of variation I love to think of our future. Of course we could never do all of the things I plan, but it's fun. Really, if we never do but a few of them it will be wonderful.

I'm too full of thoughts to write, dear – think I'll turn in and finish it tomorrow. I'm in a rest area now – have a tent and candle and everything. I've even acquired a gasoline stove.

Don't worry, sweetheart – I'm trying to the best of my ability to take care of myself – my fate as always, is solely in God's hands, and I know your prayers are ever with me. So goodnight, my only girl – I love you always. Flen. ---

It's tried to rain a little, but I managed to wash my hair, face and socks. They (socks) are hanging in the tent drying over the stove now. I have 6 pair here – wear 3 while 3 are drying wrapped around my legs. We have learned a lot of tricks. Had a good supper last night and 2 meals today so far. Much better than k rations. The little stove is nice, we heat our rations have Nescafe in them – lemonade or cocoa. You get tired of them though, canned eggs for breakfast- cheese for lunch, meatloaf for supper, all with little crackers and a piece of candy.

Your letters have been wonderful. I get them regardless of where I am in about 10 days. It has been absolutely impossible for me to answer – but you know I will at every opportunity. Your V-mail came today, but the regular air mail is faster. Got a sleeping bag today it is much nicer than 2 wet blankets. It hasn't been so terribly cold – I'm not suffering at all. In fact I have been very lucky and am very thankful for my well being so far.

Let Mother and Dad know I'm all right – send them my love as I may not get to write them. My letters will be few and far between – but don't worry sweet. Wherever I am – whatever I am doing, my thoughts are ever with you – my prayers are ever for us. I miss you and love you with all my heart. Always yours – Flen.

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1 December 1944

Sweetheart,

Our squad is bivouacked around a table in a French home. We're sitting here taking a break for a moment – all of us feel fine, had a shave yesterday, and they brought beef sandwiches to us here last night. Had some very good wine and schnapps. We slept on the kitchen floor very comfortably. Just sent one man to try and get our last three weeks supply of mail. Maybe we'll have some Christmas pkgs and have an excellent dinner...

The squad is gathered around a big box in somebody's cellar. We found all sorts of preserves – even cauliflower – which I prepared with a can of our cheese. We were all set up in an apartment house but Capt Hamm moved us back.

Last night we spent in a kitchen and bedroom, had about eight or ten Christmas packages – all the fruit cake and candy we could hold. The other squad had fried chicken and rabbit, while we had potatoes. We move from house to house, take what we want and move on.

Life has been quite pleasant lately. Have lived in houses for over a week. We keep well supplied with handkerchiefs and socks – when they get dirty we throw them away and steal some more.

Today I witnessed my first mine explosion. The engineers blew a road block and moved into the wreckage. A pig jerked a trip wire after they moved in – I was about fifty yds away. Had to serve as a medic for a few minutes. War can be such a horrible experience. It's nothing to walk down a trail and stumble over a mangled body.

Forgive all of that – but that is my everyday life. It's all sort of a nightmare – where you are half awake and know that in a little while you will wake up. I really believe I shall, darling. Wake up and find all of this just an experience to scratch off as a bad dream.

7 December 1944

...I'm in the 7<sup>th</sup> Army – I can tell you now. We have been right in the middle of a big fight – in the Vosges Mountains. I was in Sélestat day before yesterday. I was near St Dié also.

8 December 1944

Guess I'd better write again while I still have the opportunity. I've been resting up a bit – spent three nights in the same barn, and have been eating out of a mess kit again. The weather has been quite pleasant – cloudy of course, but very little rain. I spent all day sleeping in the hay loft. I'm always tired – though I get plenty of sleep. It gets dark about five-thirty and light about seven. We are always in the hay – literally – by eight. At the front, however, we don't sleep quite that much.

Honey, I don't think it can last a lot longer over here. It's my opinion that only one great offensive remains between now and victory – the battle of the Rhine. It'll be pretty touch – and may last a little longer than we suppose, but it will be over one of these days.

23 December 1944

My Sweetheart

Quite a bit has happened since I wrote last – experiences that I shall never forget – and never recall intentionally. I am the platoon runner now and practically live with Sgts Staneic and Parton. Right now we are back in a house, but have been outdoors up until now. Had a pretty tough time – went three days and nights with no sleep – guarded a pill box door and dodged grenades all one night. There were about 7 of them landed just outside the door. I would hear it click and just have time to step back inside.

I got a complete change of clothes today and am waiting to go next door for a shower in a few minutes.

Christmas Eve, 1944

My Darling,

Today has really been nice – had hot cakes for breakfast – steak and potatoes for lunch and hamburgers for supper. Besides all that I've attended Church Services once and persuaded the Chaplain to bring his organ to the house the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon is in, and we sang Christmas Carols for a few minutes before supper. The best of all, though, this morning your package came....

p.s Have been at the front in Germany.

## 1945

6 January 1945

My Sweetheart,

Had two of your letters and a Christmas card from your Dad. Hell, honey – don't worry about me. You know I'm doing the very best I can to take care of me and come back to you one of these days. As for the hell I'm going through, the worst part of that by far is being away from you. I'm not exactly at the front now – at least I'm not dodging enemy fire. Still eating at our kitchen and sleeping indoors. Don't pay too much attention to newspapers. In the first place they only give you a glimpse of what an entire army or division is doing and actually tells you very little about a regiment or battalion or company. Also what you read probably happened a month ago....

The damndest thing happened last week. A B-24 crew bailed out when two engines failed and came down in the middle of F Company. They (F Co) thought they were German paratroopers and captured them. They talked to them in their new German – and took their

watches and pistols and ripped up the parachutes for scarves and boot laces before they discovered they were both American. The pilots thought they were being captured by the Germans.

18 January 1945

Hello Sweetheart,

Missed a few days writing due to a little change, am back on the line, but quite a different one. The Platoon C.P. is an old pill box in the Maginot line. We "borrowed" a few things from a house – window, stove pipe, stove, curtain, three mattresses, potatoes, onions, etc. Have a couple of pin-up girls from Yank, and a set of gold candle holders. The place actually reminds me of my room at A&M. Of course we have to carry water and coal up a steep hill. Two hot meals a day are brought up, and we have K rations for lunch, plus anything we can skinavish. Found a two liter can and fill it with coffee twice a day when we go down to eat. I sit up from 12 'til 3 every night with the telephone, but make it up during the day. So far, the only enemy activity was some shelling yesterday. Most of them were in the village we overlook and a couple at the base of the hill. Everything is very quiet. I think we each are sweating the other out to make a move, while I'm sweating out the Russians on the Polish front.

31 January 1945 - France

My Dearest,

...Lost my job as platoon runner, am now second in command of one of the squads. Maybe by the next letter I shall have my old rating back. Sgt Staneic is now 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt as we had some battlefield commissions made in the company.

...I can't see the war lasting much longer. Germany is too hard pressed – from too many sides. I pray for its quick end – and always I think of the day I shall return to you. I hope that the constant expectancy of that day will not dull its actual appearance. But then, I always know that your presence there will make it a glorious success....

France

1 February 1945

Dearest,

You mention that the mail is snafu, so perhaps, I'd better write your birthday letter now. Last night I got four letters – one from Merlenbach with my pictures, so am enclosing them for you. We had quite a laugh at them. The boys said I didn't look exactly like a frontline refugee, but I explained they couldn't see my dirty pants – the field jacket had just been issued and I borrowed the scarf – furthermore, I had just had a bath.





8 February 1945 – France

Dearest Flen,

...We really ate today. I “managed” for quite a bit of flour for Savini, and we have been having donuts and pies every day. Today he had some dough left over, and we made pies ourselves in our mess kits.

Things are about the same – except the other night we attended a little party near here. It was a pretty rough one, too – but not the way parties usually go. I’m a squad leader now.

Our company has won quite a bit of renown – not only within the division, but Corp and Army as well. Do I bore you when I spend most of my letter discussing a shower or a good meal? Really, those simple things are my very existence. We anticipate a shower like you look forward to a day off from work. Well, I had one yesterday and clean underwear besides. Hot dog. We even had a picture show the other night – but I was at the party and missed it....

13 February 1945 – France

Dearest Flen,

This paper was once used for a penmanship class in a German School, so please forgive the uneven lines. Today the Division Band played an outdoor program here and I brought five of them for supper. One boy played under Russell Wiley (prof’s brother) at the Univ of Kansas & put on an excellent baton twirling exhibition.

Honey, usually when I receive your letters, I can’t sit right down and answer them, so if I don’t answer all your questions it is because I can’t recall them when I am able to write. I’ll try, though. Our Div. Commander is Major Gen McAuliffe, formerly of the 101 Airborne Div. He is the one that said “Nuts” to the Germans at Bastogne, and they kicked the hell out of them. He was here a few days ago to review us. Several bronze stars were awarded men of my company for some recent action. This company is known throughout the division. My regiment was the first in the 7<sup>th</sup> Army to set foot on German soil in the Siegfried Line. My company was only a few minutes behind another Co.

27 February 1945 – France

My precious Flen,

Forgive me, darling, for not writing. I could very easily have done so several times this past week but for some reason when I would sit down to write, I just couldn’t think. Last night I wrote you a three page letter and then decided it contained too much military information and tore it up. Then too, I am kept busy as hell keeping my squad on the ball. A few of them are from other branches, and it is my duty to convert them to infantrymen, but quick. This is quite a job – begins at 0545 and ends at bed time. I have to take care of them like an old hen watching a bunch of chickens and a duck.

I can still say it is very quiet here. Even right at the front this is true. The only thing that keeps our nerves constantly a bit frayed is the ever present uncertainty of tomorrow. At times we are right up on line – in fox holes or towns – then we are back a few miles in support or reserve. It is much better at the front. Of course you have a little Jerry artillery and mortar fire to content with, and patrols maybe, or a raid, but when you are pulled back you work much harder. We have something almost identical with garrison life in the states – and the ever present guard duty too. When we are slightly in the rear (still at the front) we have to be clean shaven – boots clean – hair cut – drill, stand retreat – and even have an occasional review. However, no one seems to mind too much. The war seems remote, except for the boom of our heavy artillery. This sort of activity occurs usually when our regiment is in reserve. Up on line, our battalion may be in reserve, but this is slightly different. Here we are usually billeted in houses and have a chance to clean up, but are more on the alert, and the guard is of course heavier. When we are actually on line, we are sometimes – usually – in fox holes. In all, living conditions are not too bad at all. We have hot chow in both the former instances, and maybe in

the third. Sometimes our sector on line may lay in a town we outpost, then our fox holes become houses, and when we are not on guard we get a little sleep inside. Being on the defensive is much nicer than the offensive. But always, we don't know what tomorrow may bring.

Today I played with the Division Band – really enjoyed it. Though I got quite a bit of razzing from my platoon. They all accused me of bucking for a transfer. I am perfectly happy right where I am. I am very fortunate in being in the best Co. in the regiment. We have gained more recognition than all the rest. Yes, I am still in the 103d division – same Co, same squad. For a time – at first – I was with the Battle Patrol for the Battalion, but rejoined my own outfit quite a while ago. Consequently, I missed some of the initial action – but have seen my share.

For a time I was platoon runner. You asked what that was. Runners are used primarily for communication. In a platoon, the runner maintains inter-squad contact and stays with the platoon leader. When not actually in battle, it is an easy job, as some SOP says runners will not stand guard. Since then I have been 2<sup>nd</sup> in command of a squad and am now squad leader.

***[NOTE – I was excited to see this reference – although they misspelled his name – it is definitely Gordon they are speaking of.]***

“During the day of the 18<sup>th</sup> the 2d Battalion had moved swiftly from Froschweiler to Climbach. G Company had the lead with F, E, and H Companies following in that order. Just before passing Lembach on the Maginot Line, American P-47s dropped a load of bombs perilously close to the formation. Yellow signal panels were speedily displayed by **Sgt. G. J. Flannigan [FLENNIKEN] of Lubbock, Texas** and Pfc Charles Greenfield, of Rapid Springs, Michigan. Their frantic haste saved the column from further bombing. No one was hurt.” (The 409<sup>th</sup> Infantry in World War II, East, Gleason, 114)

***[NOTE – From the Morning Reports - On March 26, 1945 “Gordon J. Flenniken, SGT, Abv 2 EM dy to temp dy VI Corps Rest Cntr, Nancy, FR per Ltr O, Hq 409<sup>th</sup> – 5 days, 25- March. He is in Nancy, France for a rest – which is a beautiful historic city.]***

***[NOTE – From the Morning Reports – He doesn't know it yet, but he has been made Sgt again effective 22 March 45. ]***

27 March 1945

...The fighting was rough – but we were so overwhelmingly superior. I'm just back from the crumpled Siegfried Line. Once again I had the privilege of working with tanks – only this time a colored outfit. They were terrific.

I managed to get myself 15 prisoners in one town – after dark. Had to shoot six of them because I couldn't see in the dark room I entered – and I heard a rifle bolt snap. After the 15 came out and no more, I blasted eight shots in the room, set it on fire, and counted six dead Germans.

The Lt probably cut the above paragraph, but it doesn't matter anyway. I know you must be worried frantic over the news of our push. After coming safely through this past week (lost my voice because I breathed too much smoke and dust) I know my prayers and yours are being answered.

We are literally kicking hell out of them – it is just about over. Dear God – let us have every success – let us finish quickly and with as few casualties as possible. Maintain our limitless faith and courage and hope. You have come every step of the way with us – just a little longer. And then, in the end, let us always remember you were here when we needed you. Don't let us wander from you when once again we are free and secure.

That is my prayer. Then I ask that He be kind to us, Dear – bring us together – let us being our day. We have yet so very much love to know. We have before us our home – our children – Please God let me and Flen have a baby.

1 April 1945 – Germany  
Dearest

What a beautiful Easter morning. Had a good night's sleep – breakfast at seven this morn. Don't have a darn thing to do but sit around shine my shoes and crease my shirt and trousers. We are supposedly on line, but it's quite different now we've got them on the run. We have a very nice place – one miraculously untouched by the many bombings this Rhine City has undergone. We have a very nice radio – three beds, kitchen, electricity – and motorbike. Our activity is practically nil. This is almost as nice as the rest center I just returned from. Only we make our own coffee instead of going to the snack bar. (My coffee is better anyway – you know)

The news that keeps pouring in is ever so good. Last night General Ike issued a proclamation instructing them how to surrender. It seems they are so disorganized they can't even give up properly. We expect the end almost any hour.

Soon I shall have an idea as to our disposition when the armistice is signed. We will be shown films explaining who and why – some will of course go to CBI – immediately, others will be furloughed to the states prior to further combat, and some will be discharged. All I can do is hope my combat time outweighs my combat experience. Somehow, I have a feeling I shall see you before too many more months have passed. Of course we understand the war must have priority, and even should I be a lucky one and get a discharge, several months must pass before transportation facilities will be available. Already we are feeling a great surge of security as the pushes progress. I hope it does not develop into a false one. I can't see where we can be stopped now. The only reason the war continues is because the higher professional warriors in Germany know their end is assured with the Allied victory. However, our trump card lies in the fact that the lesser commanders do not have a fanatical attachment to the big shots when faced with our armor and their own supply shortages. Their greatest mistake was the fact they relied on us to stop at the Rhine and reorganize. We didn't, and their retreat became a rout.

Later - - I've been listening to the AEF program all day. The news continues much the same. They are going like mad and the Russians are driving through Austria now. Just finished an hour of Paul Whiteman and some contemporary music. Do you like Grieg's Piano Concerto in A Minor? See if you can get a recording of it....

April 11, 1945 – 0830

I am enclosing a censored copy of the Beach Head News. Ordinarily we are not allowed to send this home, but this is a special edition. Perhaps this will help you to better understand my letters from Nancy. You see – G Co. was right in the middle of the fight – and the old 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was spearheading G. Co. Our Co. is the only unit smaller than a battalion mentioned – we are quite proud of our accomplishments. [NOTE – *This might have been referring to the Raid on Kindwiller. The article was not inside his letter.*]

19 April 1945 – Germany  
Sweetheart,

...Had a little excitement last night. A lone Jerry plane circled the town a couple of times, and then strafed some vehicles – he just let loose with one burst, but that was enough to get everyone excited. We immediately shut off all the lights and I went down a couple of flights from my top floor boudoir..... I've been in a number of the towns – LaWalk, Pfaffenhofen, Schlestadt, others I can't recall....

I give the war until June. Of course, there will be some bitter fighting – I think – for the inner fortress – and probably I'll be in on the finish. I dread that – the end is so near. I sincerely believe the political factor is lengthening the war unnecessarily. Tactically, Germany was defeated when we breached the Siegfried Line and the Rhine River. What has she to gain in continuing to the bitter end? Then again, it is entirely possible that she crumble from within. But they still have such a beautiful propaganda machine.

Then, when the war here is finished, the trouble begins. Japan first. Then two factors are left – Capitalism and Socialism.

Oh well – as I once said, and have since seen it proved – what does my vote count? I don't give a damn for world economics and politics. All I want is an opportunity to live my life as a civilized human being. Our only hope is our trust in God. And tonight I offer a special little prayer, as every night – for humanity, first – and then for us.

26 April 1945 – Germany

My Sweetest One

Been on the go again, so you understand why I haven't written. The town I wrote from was Bad Orb – I stayed in the Bade Hotel there. From there I had a long ride in a duck. Since then I've walked and ridden over what seems like half of Germany. We did a little, very little, fighting – took a couple more towns without a shot (in the mountains) moved out by truck and are somewhere very near the Danube. (Tomorrow I shall tell you if it's really blue for only those in love. I really think it will be.)



**BADE HOTEL**

We moved in this town last night – booted the civilians out of a few houses and moved in. We were dead tired, been marching all day – but not too tired to devour some delicious pork chops, French fries, and scrambled eggs. After a good night's sleep and a delicious breakfast we found a violin, two accordions and a player piano. The house has been roaring since – Tannhauser, William Tell, Tales from the Vienna Woods, Turkey in the Straw and Beer Barrel Polka....

28 April 1945 – Germany

Sweetheart

Darn, but I'm lonely for you tonight. How I wish I could feel your precious head in its place on my shoulder. Being away from you these past months has grown into a dull ache. Dreaming of that day when once again we'll be together has been my sole incentive.

I've been moving rather fast since leaving Bad Orb. Riding a lot, and marching more. Been following up a task force. Crossed the Danube yesterday – and the darn thing was green. All day long we watched the prisoners stream back – while we moved forward. In the distance we could see the snow covered Alps. All of Germany is like a picture book. The fields are filled with soft green grass – the hills are covered with forest, and every 3 or 4 kilometers a picturesque little village nestles in a valley. Each with its church steeple and red-tiled houses.

Yesterday 3 of us rode on top of an Artillery ammo truck. The weather was beautiful and we rode along, eating peanut butter and raspberry jam sandwiches. The truck ahead had a radio and we played it. Each town we passed through – the streets were filled with people – seemingly very friendly – all waving white flags. From every window flew a white flag. The roads were littered with the wreckage of a retreating army. Dead horses, burned vehicles – the

tanks weren't far ahead. Freed PWs – French, Polish, Russians – looting the German trucks – happy as children.

2 May 1945 – Austria

Sweetheart

Another borderline on the road home crossed. I never dreamed I should see the country I am traveling in now. The Alps are beautiful. Imagine snow in May. We have been moving so rapidly the past week that we hitched a ride with the artillery. I have been riding an ack-ack [Anti-Aircraft] truck – today “we” shot down an ME-109...

5 May 1945 – Innsbruck, Austria

Sweetheart,

...I guess the war must be just about over, the censor lifted the restriction on our exact location – so here I am. Innsbruck is the most famous of the winter resorts in the Alps. I am sending a couple of pictures I lifted the other day. We are completely surrounded by beautiful snow covered mountains, while here in the valley the weather is almost summertime...

11 May 1945 – Innsbruck, Austria

Dearest Flen

I am terribly ashamed for not writing – guess the excitement of VE & spring fever – and working pretty hard are all the excuses I have.

I can't realize that the war is ended. It's so strange at night to not black out your house – to drive with glaring headlights – to stand retreat and reveille – and wear stripes and campaign ribbons and salute – and argue about discharge and the point system.

I don't have a chance for a discharge – in fact, I have a very good chance for more overseas duty. But, I know one thing – I'm never going back to the front again. I honestly feel I have done far more than my share – and I will go to any extreme to see that I don't put any further strain on my good fortune. For every man actually under fire, there are 18 overseas not in combat. So...from now on, I think it's my turn to be one of those 18, if not one of the 50 or so at home.

I detest war and army life with all the hatred I possess. Had I known the corruption that existed over here, I would never have come over. Our dead cannot be termed anything but waste. Murder is a mild word. When politics becomes so powerful as to involve mass destruction of life – I quit. All I have done and learned these past months is exactly opposite to anything decent I have ever known.

All I want now is life and you – and that I am determined to have – if God is willing. He has given me life – miraculously – and you. All that remains is to conquer circumstances and that I will do. I am so thrilled at the prospect of seeing you again – for keeps, this time – I can hardly think. I believe it will be very soon, my Flen.

29 May 1945 – Aldrans

Hello lovely lady,

All day long we spent having a Div Review at 230 this afternoon. We even missed our lunch on account of it. The CG of the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps was here and we had battle streamers pinned on our Regimental Colors and Co and Bn Guidons. Quite an impressive ceremony – but I would have enjoyed lunch more.

I have developed a beautiful case of asthma, as have about four others. Seems this high altitude just doesn't agree with me. Hope I can bring it back to the States to help pull strings.

Tomorrow is Memorial Day and we get our first holiday. VE Day we spent digging fox holes and running a problem. Happy day.

Still nothing definite. We have credit for 2 battle stars now: Battle of the Rhine, and Central Europe. That gives me a great big 49 points (We need exactly 3 "kinder")

Got a new gadget today. It's a green bar – worn one inch below your chevrons indicating you led a unit under fire. The officers wear theirs on their shoulder epaulets. They've given us so much stuff to sew or pin on, you don't even need a shirt to cover you....

***[NOTE – From this time on it becomes a game of "points" – they had to have so many points before they could be shipped home. Gordon didn't have enough points and was worried about having to go to more combat in the Pacific. He feels he has tempted fate long enough.]***



3<sup>rd</sup> Army Headquarters  
Bad Tölz, Germany  
15 July 1945

Hello Sweetheart

Guess where I am? I took off by thumb yesterday to Munich, and came on to Bad Tölz 30 miles south. I went to the EM dining hall for supper before I started looking for Leon – and spied him eating. Boy, were we glad to see each other. After supper we went to his room a while and then toured this Hq.

What a beautiful setup. About a thousand men, all the General Staff, occupying an SS OCS school. It's an ultra modern city all in one building – 3 floors and basement forming a huge rectangle around an inner patio. Here are all the Army sections offices, Army War room, billets for troops, heated swimming pool, theater, PX, beer hall, cafeteria, showers, barber shop – everything. Leon said he didn't go outside for 2 weeks once when it was raining. 15 miles from here is a 4 lane autobahn to Munich, through some very lovely country. Innsbruck and Berchtesgaden are not far. I liked it so well I decided to pull some strings.

So....I paid a visit to G-1 (a Col. There is from Lubbock and a very good friend of Leon's) and found out he can transfer anyone anywhere. He suggested I go see the Band director, 61 AGF Band (atcd 3A HQ) – and I saw him a few minutes ago. He needed a bass drummer and clerk. I played 5 minutes and I was in.

Then I called thru about 6 operators got Sgt Adams on the phone and told him I wanted to stay overnight to see Col Thomas again in the morning. He is out now. Looks like I finally got one of those deals, Hon. The band is Category II, but Gen Patton (I saluted him while ago) is very fond of it, and in all probability will keep it here. That means if everything clicks now that we'll have to skip that 30 days – for awhile. 3d Army is AO. [Area of Operation ]

But I know that we can give up a few hours happiness to know definitely that when the war is over we will be together always. I love you so much, my Flen. Hope you forgive me for cancelling our furlough. Someday I'll make up every single second of this absence to you. So, guess we can have a sigh of relief and just start sweating out the war. Maybe when I get settled I can pull a few more strings and be with you sooner than we expect. I love you always, Flen.

I never even thought of working a deal like that – especially skipping all the channels – Battalion, Regiment, Division and Corp. I pulled the strings right in Army GHQ. What will happen now is a wire will be sent down to the 103d Division ordering my transfer and signed for Gen Patton by the Adjutant. (I saluted old “Blood and Guts” while ago and got a darn nice one back. He’s quite a flashy old gentleman.) Has a Cadillac sedan and lives all by himself in a big house near here.

The band is category II, but is indefinitely attached to Army Hq. Gen Patton is very fond of it – 61<sup>st</sup> AGF Band. It has a CWO in charge – a Mexican from Mexico City who was very nice and seemed quite well educated. He listened to me play the snare and bass drums – had me read a few lines of music – and then walked over to Col Thomas’ office with me. Another Colonel was there and he told him he had found just what he needed and wanted me here immediately. I’m going to play with them in the morning.

If everything clicks, I’ll probably stay right here until the war ends or a year until I have enough points for discharge.

I’m so thrilled I hardly know what to think. Will let you know how I make out in the morning. [3<sup>rd</sup> Army is AO] All my love, Gordon J.

**[NOTE – As of 20 July 1945, he was transferred to the 61<sup>st</sup> AGF Band, Hq 3<sup>d</sup> US Army located at Bad Tölz, Germany. He is working as a clerk in the Orderly Room but part of the band when required. ]**

21 July 1945 – Bad Tölz, Germany  
My Sweetheart

One of the Generals [*The General he is referring to was Gen Hobart Gay*] here has a black cocker just like (almost) Bunkie. He calls him “Stumpy.” We had an interesting conversation, in which he told me he hoped the front line Infantry boys didn’t hold the point system against the General Staff. Said he was thoroughly disgusted with it, and all the blame goes to the War Dept.

Some of the high point boys here in the band were amazed that all I had for 6 months combat were two stars and a CIB. You see – they have 5 stars. Of course I barely missed 5 points once when a white hot piece of shrapnel went through Sgt Nordlund’s helmet (and head) and stopped in my sleeping bag in my pack. I have no conscience whatever for what I am doing.

Bad Tölz, Germany  
6 August 1945  
My Darling,

...We are going to Nurnburg the 9<sup>th</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup> to play for the 3d Army Track meet there. They say Nurnburg is the worst wrecked city over here. And as soon as I get back I’m going to Munich to spend the day and work our payroll up for August. So I should be rather busy for a few days anyway.

I was rummaging through some papers this afternoon, and ran across a copy of Gen Patton’s speech, which I am inclosing. I had never paid much attention to the remarks about his language, but after reading this, I must admit the preacher back home who denounced him must have had some grounds. Mr Diaz, our WO told me that he heard another speech back in Ireland, somewhat along the same lines. There were three divisions present, and a huge PA system was set up all around the place. Right in the square of a little Irish town. At first the windows were filled with people hanging out listening, but one by one they were shut, and finally only Patton and his soldiers were left. This language is startling in print, but I am afraid that I must admit it is strictly typical of all soldier’s conversations. I do not denounce that Old Man for it myself, for I can readily understand that he was just a GI talking to some other GI’s, and that is

the way we do it. Of course, we hope to be able to drop our adjectives some day when we return to conventionalities. (Is there such a word?)

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***NOTE - Enclosed with Gordon's letter was a three-page, onion skin carbon copy of this speech. Remember this is from the office of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Headquarters where he found this copy. Gen George Patton was physically at this base in Bad Tölz when Gordon was there. I found a copy of the speech on the internet – The webmaster had admitted he had taken it from many sources, including Hollywood! There were many differences, omissions and additions from his version to this version. It would be interesting to know if this version is THE official actual version. I found that this speech may have been made on June 5th 1944***

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GENERAL PATTON'S  
Speech to his

THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY  
(In the United Kingdom)

The Corps Chaplain gave the invocation, the men standing with bowed heads, asking divine guidance for the great Third Army that they might help speed victory to enslaved Europe. Major General Cooke, then introduced Lt Gen Simpson, whose army was still in Africa, preparing for their part in the war.

"We are here", said General Simpson, "to listen to the words of a great man. A man who will lead you into whatever you might face, with heroism, ability, and foresight. A man who has proven himself amid shot and shell. My greatest hope is that someday soon, I will have my own great army fighting with him, side by side."

General Patton arose and strode swiftly to the microphone. The men snapped to their feet and stood silently. Patton surveyed them grimly. "Be seated." The words were not a request, but a command. The General's voice rose high and clear.

"Men, this stuff we hear about America wanting out of this war, not wanting to fight, is a crock of bullshit. Americans love to fight, traditionally. All real Americans love the sting of battle. When you were kids, you all admired the champion marble player, the fastest runner, the big league ball-players, the toughest boxers. Americans play to win all the time. I wouldn't give a hoot in Hell for a man who lost and laughed. That's why Americans have never lost, and will never lose a war, for the very thought of losing is hateful to an American."

He paused and looked over the silent crowd. "You are not all going to die. Death must not be feared. Every man is frightened at first in battle. If he says he isn't, he is a God damned liar. Some men are cowards, yes, but they will fight just the same, or get the hell shamed out of them watching men who do fight just the same. The real hero is the man who fights even though he is scared. Some get over their fright in a few minutes under fire, some, take hours, for some, it



takes days. The real man will never let the fear of death overpower his honor, his sense of duty to his country, and his innate manhood. All through your career of army life you men have bitched about what you called chicken-shit drilling. That is all for a purpose. Drilling and discipline must be maintained in the army, if only for one reason **INSTANT OBEDIENCE TO ORDERS AND TO CREATE CONSTANT ALERTNESS**. I don't give a damn for a man who is not always on his toes. You men are veterans or you wouldn't be here. You are ready. A man to continue breathing must be alert at all times. If not, sometime a German son-of-a-bitch will sneak up behind him and beat him to death with a sock full of shit."

The men roared. Patton's grim expression did not change. "There are four hundred neatly marked graves somewhere in Sicily", he roared, "All because one man went to sleep on the job". He paused, and the men grew silent. "But they are German graves," he said softly, "For we caught the bastard asleep before they did".

The General clutched the microphone tightly, his jaw out-thrust, "An Army is a team. Lives, sleeps, eats, fights as a team. This individual heroic stuff to us is a lot of crap. The bilious bastards who wrote that kind of stuff for the "Saturday Evening Post" don't know any more about real battle than they do about fucking!"

The men slapped their legs and rolled in glee. This was the old boy as they imagined him to be, and in rare form, too. He had it. "We have the finest food, finest equipment, the best spirited men in the world," Patton bellowed, he lowered his head and shook it pensively.

Suddenly he snapped his head up, facing the men belligerently. "Why, by God," he thundered, "I actually pity those sons-of-bitches we're going up against, by God, I do". The men clapped and howled delightfully. There would be many barracks tales about the "Old Man's" choice of words and phrases. They would become part and parcel of the Third Army History.

"My men don't surrender", Patton continued, "I don't want to hear of a soldier under my command being captured unless he is hit. Even if you're hit, you still can fight. That's not just bull shit either. The kind of men I want is like a Lieutenant in Libya, who, when with a Luger against his chest, jerked off his helmet, swept the gun aside with the other hand and busted the hell out of the Boche with his helmet. Then he jumped on the gun and went out and killed another German. By this time, the man had a bullet through his chest. That's a man for you."

He halted and the crowd waited. "All the real heroes are not storybook combat fighters, either," he went on. "Every little job is essential to the whole scheme. What if every truck driver suddenly decided that he didn't like the whine of those shells and turned yellow and jumped headlong into the ditch? He could say to himself "they won't miss just one in thousands". What if every man said that? Where in the hell would we be now? No, thank God, Americans don't say that. Every man does his job. Every man serves the whole. Every man, every department, every unit, is important in the vast scheme of things. The ordnance men are needed to supply the guns; the quartermaster to bring up food and clothes for us, for where we're going there isn't a hell of a lot to steal. Every damn last man in the mess hall, even the one who heats the water to keep us from getting diarrhea, has a job to do. Even the Chaplain is important, for if we get killed, and he was not there to bury us, we'd all go to Hell. Each man must not only think of

himself, but think of his buddy fighting beside him. We don't want yellow cowards in this Army. They should be killed off like flies. If not, they will go back to the States after the war and breed more like them. The brave men will breed more brave men. One of the bravest men I saw in the American Campaign was one of the fellows I saw on top of a telephone pole in the midst of furious fire, while we were plowing towards Tunis. I stopped and asked what the hell he was doing up there at a time like this. He answered, "Fixing the wire, Sir". "Isn't that a little unhealthy right now?" I asked. "Yes Sir, but this 'Goddamn wire has got to be fixed". There was a real soldier. There real soldier. There was a man who devoted all to his duty, no matter how great the odds, no matter how seemingly insignificant his duty may have seemed at the time. You should have seen these trucks on the road to Cebes. Those drivers were magnificent. All the day they drove along those son-of-a-bitchin' roads, never stopping, never diverting from their course, with shells bursting all around them. We got through on good old American guts. Many of the men drove for over forty-eight consecutive hours."

The General paused, staring challengingly over the silent sea of faces. You could hear a pin drop anywhere on this vast hillside. The only sound was the breeze stirring the leaves and the animated chipping of the birds in the branches on the General's left.

"Don't forget," Patton barked, "You don't know I'm here at all. No word of that fact is mentioned in any letters. The world is not supposed to know what the hell they did with me. I'm not supposed to be commanding this Army; I'm not even supposed to be in England. Let the **FIRST BASTARDS TO FIND OUT BE THE GODDAMN GERMANS!** Someday I want them to rise up on their hind legs and howl, 'Jesus Christ, it's the Goddamned Third Army and that son-of-a-bitch Patton, again."

The men roared and cheered delightedly. This statement had real significance behind it, much more than hit the eye, and the men instinctively sensed the fact, and the telling mark they themselves would play in world history because of it, and they were being told as much right now. Deep sincerity and seriousness lay behind the General's colorful words, and well the men knew it, but they loved the way he put it, as only he could do it.

The crowd laughed, and Patton continued quietly, "Sure, we all want to go home, we want this thing over with, but you can't win a war lying down. The quickest way to get it over with is to go get the bastards. The quicker they are whipped, the quicker we go home. **THE SHORTEST WAY HOME IS THROUGH BERLIN!** When a soldier is lying in a shell hole, if he stays there all day, the Boche will get him eventually, and probably get him first. The hell with taking it! Give it to them first. There is no such thing as a fox-hole war anymore. Foxholes slow up an offensive. **KEEP MOVING!** We'll win this war, but we'll win it by fighting and by showing our guts." He paused and his eagle-like eyes swept over the crowded hillside.

"We want to get the hell over there, Patton yelled, "We want to get over there and clean the Goddamn thing up. Then we'll have to take a little jaunt against the purple-pissing Japanese and clean their nest out too, before the Marines get all the credit."

"There's one great thing you men will be able to say when you go home. You may all thank God for it. Thank God that at least thirty years from now, when you are sitting around the

fireside with your grandson on your knee, and he asks you what you did in the Great World War II, you won't have to say that you shoveled shit in LOUISIANA.”

END

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Bad Tölz, Germany

8 August 1945

Darling Flen,

...What do you think of the Atomic Bomb? Gosh, I haven't been so optimistic since I got this transfer. That puts me just a little closer to you, baby. And I don't mean that selfishly. I pray constantly for those boys out there. I know what they are up against, and a single day off the war makes me happy for them.

Nurnberg, Germany

10 August 1945

My Sweetheart,

My optimism knows no bounds. A little after two o'clock this afternoon we received the news flash that Japan would accept the Potsdam ultimatum – with the exception the Emperor would remain in power. As I understand it, the Emperor is not the one to be held responsible, but rather the ones who have usurped his authority, using him as a guarded figurehead. It would matter, little, it seems, whether or not their request is granted. The atomic bomb came as a complete surprise to us – and even overshadows the equally thrilling but less surprising entry of the Russians. Ever since the news blackout of Red Army activities on the Manchurian front, most of us have felt it would be just a matter of time until they did declare war.

I am so very happy – as I know you must be. Surely, it is but a matter of hours now. And then, perhaps our expectations of another year apart will be blown sky high. Of course, I realize that now I am “practically” in the Army of occupation – we are still Category II – and only attached to 3<sup>rd</sup> Army. However, I may still have done right in deciding to stay over here. We will still occupy Japan – unless we accept Chinese and perhaps now, Russian, offers to do so. And 49 points still isn't too good. However, I still can't help feeling that I, myself, have cheated us a little. Only time will tell. I am so very happy, though, for all the world. My own miseries, and yours, are obscured by that....

2 October 1945

Dearest Girl,

... Boy, tonight's news was a revolution. Patton is relieved of his command. Personally, I don't think the newspapers flare up of the past few weeks has a thing to do with it. There is so much “Patton Propaganda” that it is difficult for even one who is here to distinguish the real from the imaginary. The official discharge score was announced as 70 and that it would be lowered to 60 in a month. That will be only 3 points above me, baby. Gosh this is hard to sit here and watch the inevitable approach of that day. It's awfully slow.

7 October 1945

Dearest Flen,

...Boy, has this been one busy day. First the ceremony for Generals Patton and Truscott in the gym (it was raining), then at two o'clock we had a formal review for them in the quadrangle, and from there went over to the field for the football game between the 38<sup>th</sup> AAA Brig and 80<sup>th</sup> Div. I don't even know who won. Couldn't get interested in the game, and when it

started raining in the second half, we left. [NOTE - Truscott took over command of the U.S. Third Army from General George S. Patton on 8 October 1945, and led it until April 1946.]

15 November 1945

My Darling,

...Tomorrow I've got a job. Each man is entitled to three more ribbons – American Theater, Victory Medal and Service Medal. And they all have to go in the service records. I guess the USO cowboys have won their fight. Now they can wear four ribbons, and not ever leave Texas. "But I tried to go overseas." And the worst thing that can be said of a TSgt or an officer is that "He couldn't even get the Bronze Star." I don't care – just an afterthought. What I want is to wear slacks and comfortable shoes and no hat.

16 November 1945

Sweetheart,

...The latest rumor is that 56 pointers will leave here the 1<sup>st</sup> of December. However much truth there is to this doesn't really matter, for it will just mean sitting in some Cat IV outfit a longer time waiting for a boat. But, it will be damn nice to get away from here at last – on the way. Even if it means giving up a few comforts. I am ready for a change of station. In fact, I'm downright impatient to get moving.

We had to attend another lecture on the "DeNazification of Germany" today. Besides being held in a freezing auditorium, the lecture was the most boring, stupidly prepared and delivered one I have yet heard. They must think the enlisted man is an illiterate – judging by the imbecilic tripe they shove down our throats. I can truthfully say the occupation of Germany is failing miserably in its purpose. Purely because it's very purpose is so vague. This officer – a Captain in MG tried to tell us today that our mission is to teach the Germans Democracy. For one hour he told us this, and then I asked him if he didn't think that purpose was impossible in the first place when the Russians were probably selling the Germans Communism at the same time. He could not answer. The whole mistake lies in using the militia as governmental forces. In the first place, they know nothing of the problems and the solutions that confront the German nation, and in the second place, couldn't carry them out if they did. The proper solution is to use the military merely to maintain order, and allow the civilian populace itself, under the supervision of competent statesmen, to select and establish a suitable form of government. Not necessarily a democratic one. I personally advocate a Socialistic State. I do not believe it our duty to choke our form of government down their throats, when in the first place, it has proven not necessarily to be the best form in the world. A democracy could not possibly exist where strife is in common existence. Only where there is the practice of the economy of abundance. And, if we don't propose to take from the rich and give to the poor, so to speak, then why should we try to convert them to democracy? The freedom to win your success can only exist where it is possible for that success itself to be reached.

19 November 1945

Darling Flen,

...This has been a terrifically busy day – got up at eight and been running since. Our sixty pointer is leaving in the morning for some FA Bn. And Joseph – Chief Clerk for Hq Co, and formerly Bn Clerk, 409<sup>th</sup> Regt, told me he sent a TWX to the 103d Div for authority for our third battle star – the Ardennes Campaign. It has been officially awarded, but we were out of contact, and didn't get it. That gives me 62 points.

24 November 1945

Dearest,

We are leaving for the 42<sup>nd</sup> Field Hospital, APO 403, c/o PM NY at 11 this morning. I was hoping to have your new address before I took off, but the letter of this morning was dated the 25<sup>th</sup> of October.

26 November 1945 – Erlangen, Germany

My Darling,

Here is chapter II in my blow by blow account. The 2<sup>nd</sup> night was a little warmer than the first – I dug out my 4<sup>th</sup> blanket. I am in an ideal spot – first three graders pull CQ, and cpls down pull guard and other odd jobs. Buck Sgts don't do anything. O'Brien got CQ today and has to spend the night in the nasty old orderly room – where they have steam heat.

No later rumors have developed than the ones you know already – except we may get our whiskey ration before we leave. We plan to save it for the long cold trip ahead. The Major here is trying to get better transportation for us than the usual 40 & 8's. We still expect to be out of here by Saturday. This is going to be a very pleasant six days. We have five new pictures scheduled – saw one last night. There is absolutely nothing to do but just be available.

29 November 1945 – Still here

My darling

One more day here – tomorrow. I might as well give you the latest poop. We are to be aboard ship between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of December. We leave in 40 & 8's from here Saturday morning for Camp Philadelphia for five days and from there to Marseilles. That's the score – and of course it is quite subject to change at any time, but most of us are rather optimistic. Today we had our umpteenth showdown inspection. (Just like the ones we had before we came over.) The object is to not only occupy your spare time with packing and unpacking, but it also gives your clothes and equipment that slightly worn look so coveted by the rear echelon troops. Really though – there is a lot less red tape so far than I had expected. I rather imagine we will bump into a great deal more at Camp Philadelphia.

...We've been here a whole week, and it doesn't seem like that long at all. Just four more of them, Butch. Here's my schedule (all mine): Leave here on the 1<sup>st</sup> for Philadelphia, stay there 'til the 8<sup>th</sup>, leave for Marseilles the 8<sup>th</sup>, arrive the 11<sup>th</sup>, stay 'til the 16<sup>th</sup>. Leave there the 16<sup>th</sup> for NYPOD – arrive between 21<sup>st</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. Leave there then, and get home (drunk) about January 1<sup>st</sup>. How does that sound? With absolutely perfect connections, I could be in Houston Christmas morning. But that is asking for an egg in my beer (and I've sworn off of beer – at least until I can get some Budweiser.)

Camp Philadelphia, France

4 December 1945

Hi Baby,

The trip wasn't half as bad as I thought it was going to be at first, though it did take one day longer than we had anticipated. 72 hours to cover 400 miles isn't too bad, is it? There were 19 of us in the car, and we had more than enough blankets and mattresses and rations to go around, besides a darn good little coal stove. We arrived in Rheims last night and here at the Staging Area this morning about eleven. After a five-mile ride in trucks, we got to our area. As yet, we are very unsettled, and no new rumors are floating around. I have charge of one tent with 15 men in it – concrete floor, coal stove, and electric lights, but no bulbs. We are to operate our own kitchen, and the cooks have already been put to work fixing supper. At first, it looked pretty miserable, but after a closer inspection, I found we had hot showers, a nice washroom and latrine very close. Someone said we would be here 11 days, or until the 15<sup>th</sup>, but that is only a rumor. The entire area around Rheims is made up of troops in the process of

redeployment, and looks like a huge bivouac area. The 26<sup>th</sup> division is set up about a mile from here, and Camp Pittsburgh and St Louis are near.

...Even with my extra comforter, I slept rather cold last night, but I think it will be worse tonight without it. At least, though, most of us can get all our stuff into our duffle bag, which was quite impossible before. We are down to bare essentials – which is just enough to keep from freezing – no hoods, sweaters, scarves, or extra field jackets. I tried to keep the comforter by hiding it in the next tent – as they inspected ours first. Just after we got back, I was standing beside my cot holding it up – and the supply officer walked in and said “I’ll take that – and that sweater behind you,” for I had kept it too. Then he proceeded to really give us the low down – mentioning of course, that the officers were just as cold as we are, and I said I hardly thought that possible, since they have more cover per man – and he said he had to buy it – and I couldn’t shut up, and said that since the enlisted man wasn’t in a position to purchase the necessities of life, he had to resort to other methods of acquiring it. Nothing happened – but when he left, six men went down voluntarily and turned in blankets. I don’t care though – I’ll not be too cold, as we are going to keep the stove burning all night.

8 December 1945

My dearest,

It has been colder here today than Pampa ever was. The ground is frozen and the wind whistles across these barren plains like a banshee. Most of my day was spent reading Rebecca in a big easy chair at the Red Cross Club. The only warm spot in France. The wash water froze in our mess gear before we ate. Tonight, we are all huddled around our little stove and though it’s red hot, it penetrates only about 3 feet.

We did one more “last thing” this afternoon – filled out a Separation Center file card – name, rank, serial number, branch of service, MOS, and home town. Mine was Houston, and I was more or less assured I would be discharged at Ft. Sam.

19 December (8 PM) – Camp Pittsburgh, France

Hello Mucklehead

Meisch and I are comfortably settled here now. We are five miles from the old camp. I picked out the 3 best tents (these are pyramidal and hold only 6 men) and have them reserved for my boys who are coming over in the morning. We will be warmer here – the tents are a little better winterized (sides 3’ high, concrete floor, door and stove). Got a good hot fire and know where plenty of coal is. Electricity too. Part of the mess personnel is here and they had supper for about 20 of us while ago.

23 December 1945 – Damned Old Hole, France

My Love,

It hardly seems possible that Christmas is just around the corner – it seems only a few days ago that I was in Bad Tölz wondering if it would ever come – and where I would be. Well, I know. But it’s nice to know that time is passing so rapidly. You know what – in a few more short weeks I’ll be with you! Then we will look backward, and Christmas and the New Year will be just around the corner. Believe me? Don’t despair now, sweetheart. The very thought that it is such a short time to go – compared with all the long weary weeks behind keeps me smiling.

Tomorrow is Christmas Eve. How I wish I could spend it with you. To sit with you in front of our fireplace – maybe hang up our stockings – and by all means read “The Night Before Christmas” or maybe “A Christmas Carol.” Instead, Meisch and I are planning to attend midnight mass at the Rheims Cathedral.

LATER –  
27 December 1945  
My precious,

I'm out of envelopes – everyone else is, the APO is closed and they have all my money at finance. So – if you will excuse me, I'll write a book instead of a letter. Today brought some good news, but I'm almost afraid to tell you about it for fear the same thing will happen as to my last little bit of morale lift. Our port call came today! **We are to leave here the 31<sup>st</sup> – reporting at Camp Herbert Tarreyton the 1<sup>st</sup>. This is the LeHavre POE.** That's the dope and I'm not going to enlarge on it a bit, though I can assure you our morale is much higher now.

30 December 1945  
Hi Baby

We're really leaving in the morning. We rate 1<sup>st</sup> class chair cars this time, and have two stops for chow – arriving LeHavre midnight. I keep hoping to be on a boat in three or four days – it's possible – but will certainly be less than 10. Finally found an envelope this morning.

Gosh Baby – I'm really getting excited now! How about you? I'll wire or write you when we board ship – and call you the first thing when I hit home – as it stands now – probably around the 20<sup>th</sup>. I love you!!!! Flew.

## 1946

Camp Herbert Tareyton  
Le Havre, France  
1 January 1946

My Angel

I'm a little closer to you now – in fact, in another day or so I think I can tell you our sailing date. The rumor is sometime after the 5<sup>th</sup> – and not long. By this time next week, I hope to be on a boat. Just as soon as I know definitely I'll send you a cable.

We got up yesterday morning at 3:45 and walked a couple of miles to Le Petit Mourmelon to our train. It was an awfully beat up train – some cars had cardboard windows, none of them had heat or lights. (We did have a window.) I don't know why we got up so early, for it didn't pull out until 8 o'clock. The ARC brought a club-mobile and we had hot coffee with our K ration.

Finally we took off and though I had 2 pair of pants – overcoat and one blanket on, I nearly froze to death. We burned K ration boxes at every stop to try to heat our shoes a little and the damn thing stopped more than it went. Averaged 8 mph. We hit our noon chow stop at three p.m. and they fed 2000 of us in 45 minutes. I went through so fast the first time I had to go back for my food. Someone yelled chow and 40 cars piled out on the run and lined up 4 abreast and 6 blocks long. Longest damn chow line I ever saw. We ran through a long building where they had kitchens set up in box cars and French women serving – filed out and ate in long tents with tables and benches. It really hit the spot.

Then began the short, fast runs, and 2 hour stops and we hit our supper about nine last night. This took 2 hours, because another train beat us in, and also they shook us down when the heat unit out of a field range disappeared from the kitchen. (They are ideal train stones.) They finally found it – the officers had it.

Then two of the boys (there were four of us crammed into 2 seats) lay down on the floor – so I had a whole seat. I needn't explain how I twisted and squirmed trying to lie down on it and sleep.

I woke up and smoked and shivered innumerable times – until we arrived in LeHavre at 3 a.m. this morning. (Almost as bad as the Ft Worth – Lubbock run.) The next hours were taken up with a 6 mile ride to Tareyton in semi-trailer trucks open - and standing up. Finally, just before the sun came up we herded into tents and threw down our rolls. I didn't even turn over until way too late for breakfast.

We spent all day making our tents livable. I scrounged a QM mattress. Nick and Mackey are still with me – Meisch must have gotten lost in the wrong tent. It's cold as hell here at night, but not so bad during the day. We drew two extra blankets and firewood today and anyway, I don't expect to be here very long. We had an excellent lunch – Krauts cook and serve and don't seem to care how much you eat. Of course, they may load our beets with arsenic, but I don't eat beets. We had a regular Thanksgiving dinner this evening – turkey and cranberry sauce and everything. Turned in our francs – (we get good ole USA money before we sail).

And to end a perfect day, I am Sgt of the guard tonight. Really rough – the men stand 2 hours in 24 and I sleep all the time – except I've been helping with some stencils – our shipping orders.

I am to be separated at Camp Fannin (Tyler, Texas – I think). Houston is not in the zone covered by Ft Sam.

I've caught a cold – got my throat painted this morning and all the rest of the works at the dispensary. That train ride was a SOB. But, I'll have it knocked in the head in a couple of days. Anyway, I've already had flu shots.

Actually – this camp is quite a bit more comfortable than the last one. And much closer home. The part I have dreaded most is past. Just a long siege of seasickness and a 3-day train ride and another much shorter train ride remain.

They tell us we should be out of here before the week ends. But of course that depends on several factors. I feel rather certain it will be before the 10<sup>th</sup> – my guess is the 5<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup>.

My tentative arrival date in Houston, as it stands now, will be around the 20<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup>. I keep hoping, anyway. As soon as I know our ship and actual sailing date, I can estimate that a little closer. I'll send a cable and call you from New York.

Until then, guess I'll just keep my fingers crossed and dream a little longer of the girl of my dreams. Can you realize that we'll be together in three more weeks? I can hardly believe it. Oh golly, Flen – I tingle. I love you always – Flen.

6 January 1946

My darling,

The boys asked me if I were going to add to my continued letter – hell, I started to tear it up, it had so many false starts. It's gotten to the point where I can't write one damn thing that doesn't prove to be wrong later. I guess I could have spared you a lot of anxiety by not telling every rumor as I have.

We are still alerted – still plan to board the Zanesville Victory sometime tomorrow, and hope to sail before the 8<sup>th</sup>. All that is still tentative and quite subject to change. Nevertheless we are more or less optimistic. I'll never learn patience though – not in a thousand years.

I'm afraid that once I do hit New York that I won't go quite as fast as they tell us. We certainly haven't so far – (damn liars). Been in the "pipeline" 6 weeks now.






7 January 1946 – LeHavre, France

'I'M ON A BOAT'!!!!

My precious,

This is absolutely, positively, and definitely the last letter. I got my luger back and 45 dollars in American currency while ago. Tonight is our last one here, we board ship in the morning at 10:00 o'clock.

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We weigh anchor tomorrow afternoon at 4, high tide. Probably have K rations for lunch – but we plan to go to breakfast – always a first time for everything.

Our boat – the Zaneville – got in last night but couldn't dock until 4 this afternoon. It was due 4 days ago. They say the trip requires 8 to 10 days. It hardly seems possible to be actually getting home. Please forgive me for sending so darn many "last" letters. I won't do it anymore.

USS Zanesville  
LeHavre POE  
10 January 1946

My Precious,

Guess what I'm doing here? I can't. We boarded ship about 11 a.m. the 8<sup>th</sup> – twiddled our fingers awhile and at 4 pm weighed anchor for New York. Everybody was all settled down for 8 days of seasickness – we had a very good supper and were out of sight of land before dark.

Then the sea got rough – our boiler went haywire – we stopped – all the lights went out. We continued on across the channel to Plymouth, England, but it was too rough to put in – we were ordered to Liverpool – but the Capt headed back across the Channel.

I managed to eat breakfast the 9<sup>th</sup> – kept it down about an hour. This S-O-B damn near turned over. It was rolling 30 degrees each way and every roll duffle bags, GI cans, mess kits and G.I.'s slid from one side to the other. Up on deck (I was Cpl of a guard relief) in the bow it was like being on a high speed elevator – or more like diving a plane. We were dipping all rails – bow and aft and starboard and port with each roll. I was looking for my guard and stopping once in a while to get up the rest of my supper.

All night we were in the storm. They tried to feed supper (I stayed in bed) and they say it was a riot. People kept falling down the hatch with food and coffee all over them. Gad! What a night. Everywhere people hanging on to anything and puking their head off.

We just docked here after taking 24 hours to cross from England. And had a darn good supper. (My first meal since yesterday morning.) We are to spend the night board ship – load in trucks at 11 in the morning and reboard ship at another pier. Another Victory ship – the Costa Rica – and should weigh anchor tomorrow afternoon (11<sup>th</sup>) about 4.

So – once again, I managed to tell you a great big lie. We should hit New York the 20<sup>th</sup> now – but I don't believe anything – except I love you – miss you terribly. Forgive me for being such a heartbreaker, dear – I promise to make up for it someday. I love you – Flen.

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***NOTE – Gordon finally made it home to his bride of 2 ½ years whom he had never had the privilege of living together as husband and wife! He went to work for his father in Tucumcari, New Mexico for a few years. He and his wife had two sons. They eventually moved to Oklahoma City OK and he started his own business. He died in 1978 of emphysema at only 56 years of age, and she died eight years later of Parkinson's. He never talked about his days in the military.***



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