

24 December 1944

Dear Mom:

The night before Christmas - and there couldn't be a mouse stirring in this lonely outpost town. The jerries may not like it if we stirred around too much and far be it from us to raise the ire of the jerries. Its kind of a lonesome Christmas eve sans tree, sans tinsels, sans radio and carols. Just my typewriter and a couple of candles and a roaring fire in the fireplace. I was invited out to a party in a village about fifteen miles from here but no party is worth going out in a jeep in this cold weather - leastwise for me after a hard day. Yesterday and today I have been making the rounds of the outposts - saw the Ikenaga boy today and exchanged greetings. The mail clerk just brought me a gift from Horace and Joan, I'll open it after a while.

Yesterday I spent the afternoon taking myseventy m'selles carolers around the third Bn with Chaplain Yamada. Had rather a nicetime and the girls certainly opened their eyes at the food they ate in the camps. These girls are supposedly from the better families - but they ate everything like wolves and squealed with joy at the present of 'two chocolate bars (GI kind - terrible) one bar of lux soap, a pkge of colgates tooth brush and a pckge of cigarettes plus tooth paste. To them, since they are unobatibale around here it represented a king's ransom. I ofetn wonder how you and I will be if our social existenee is reduced to the level of thinking a bar of chocolate the best inthe world. They sang the carols pretty good although the American carols are reallyso much better than these tricky French ones. After they were escorted back to the RC - I went around to see a couple of friends and since I cannot go back to my area at night due to the blackout and tricky hills and besides a rule around here that every man must be armed at night - I don'tcarry arms.- (thats only for publication) I stayed in a htoel of a dinky town. Had a pretty good rest however.

This morning I came back early and had servide with the men in the artillery and saw Horace's brother anf the Ikenaga boy.

One service I had this afternoon on the line impressed me so much. We had it in a dark celler like place in candle light. The boys had found a piano and a boy played it for us - we sang the carols - and as I said to the boys, this time a few years ago we would be singing carols in my home at the annual open house - but this Christmas meant more to me

because here in this candle light service - with men who had gone through hell and faced all dangers together - there is a certain bond that ties us together and on Christmas time it brings nearer to us - the friendship we have made. It brought tears to my eyes when we sang silent night - and I know a few of the boys too felt the same way.

The letter you sent me written on the 23rd and 20th got burned when the candle fell on it. I feel so bad as I have kept all your letters to date and now will have to miss these two.

I received five dollars worth of airmail stamps from Mr. Ikenaga and as it is useless for me to try to use them - I am going to send them to you as I only use six cents on my letters.

Tomorrow is Christmas and we at home would be creeping up to beat Peter to the tree. I remember when we used to have Santa Claus for him and maybe when I come home he will join in the fun and help me be Santa Claus to Jane. I hope this year you might be able to have a tree for the little ones -

I will have two more services tomorrow - and then go into Nice for a dinner with some new found friends. I have met so many people here - but none as yet in France I like so much as the ones in Italy. The French seem to be more receivers than givers. They beg for things and one is always certain that if a French man makes friends - its for mercenary reasons. I remember in Italy at the Malenottis - I offered them some food and things but they refused to take it - they did not want Americans to think all Italians were beggars. In France not suffering as much as the Italians - they would grab the shirt off your back.

A Merry Christmas to you, mom, I love you so much and need you so much. Today when the boy was playing the carols - a thought came to me - "Hisako plays the piano too and wonderful -" and a great longing to hear you play the carols once and sing when we were so happy around the house. It sounds so silly I know - but one forgets those things - then all of a sudden you become real to me through association and things that we used to like together. Tonight more than ever I miss you.

Oh yes, Horace and Joan sent me a handkerchief and an army service kit for buttons etc.

Good night dear - a Merry Christmas and may next Christmas see us together again.

love

Paul