

July 8 1944

Dear Mom:

Just received your letter today of the 19th and thank you very much. I enjoyed Peter's letter. Take care of him. I am typing this in a little dugout - wishing of course and praying that this mess would be over soon. War is hell - I have seen what hell is like -

I don't know if the censors will allow these words to go through to you - but feel that the home folks should realize what these boys and many other American boys are going through. People probably think that we go through these foreign countries like tourists - seeing things and just having a holiday. Actually when we do get any passes to go anywhere - it would be only for a few hours and only between breaks. The rest of the time - its just hell - undreamable horror and fear.

The first time in battle, we were shelled for five hours straight - I crawled in a little culvert barely able to squeeze my body through and just sweated the whole thing through. Fortunately none of my group was hurt but others in the vicinity were hurt badly. After that we have had several - my jeep blew its tires out from shrapnel in one of them - the fear of these screaming whining shells is indescribable and almost unbearable. We sleep where we can and think ourselves fortunate if we can find a barn to sleep on the manure and hay. As for food, have gone without it for a day at a stretch and do not miss it. We must drink our water and gobs of it. We hardly sleep when in action - busy with the casualties which come in. I have seen officers and men crack up under the intense shelling - just go crazy - so that we have to strap them in and there was a time I was afraid I would crack after seeing an old friend's body come in. A friend I knew in LA. I just sat down and cried like a baby - and I don't blame men for cracking up. Someday I will tell you about it - but right now I don't want to think about it.

To get a rest away from the front lines I came back to see the head chaplain in the rear. I also wanted to find a good place to rest so stopped at one of the Italian farmhouses and begged for a room to stay in. The family was awfully nice to us - and Yamato and I had a big double bed with inner spring mattresses. We took a bath which we hadn't taken for days and smelt normal again. Had a nice rest - If I told you that I was scared to go back - you wouldn't laugh will you? We all are but duty calls us back everytime no matter how dreadfully scared we are.

I had services for some of the boys this morning - I cannot scoff at foxhole religion anymore. After facing stark realism - these men do turn to God as their own sustenance. What have we left to turn to - material things cannot help us, only God and his infinite love and compassion. Next time anyone mentions anything about the glory of war - just walk away. If you ever see movie actors like Errol Flynn heroically going through some battlefield with torn sleeves and a submachine gun in his hand - throw a ripe tomatoe on the screen.



War is never like the screen portray it as or magazines write it up in its hero novels or what the home folks picture it to be. Perhaps in my position I see only the worst part of it - but it is terrible.

Somehow though I am glad I am here with the boys. I am sharing their dangers and I know now what war is. However, there are times in my weaker moments I wonder what made me volunteer for - but to think of the other boys here who are facing far more dangers than I am exposed to - realize that my position and place is with them. I am afraid many of our friends at home are going to receive bad news. Pray for them and console them as much as possible when they get the news for it is just as much our loss as well as theirs.

Don't fear for me mom, for I am OK. Take care of Peter and Jane which is your paramount duty and I will take care of myself which is mine. Perhaps here in Italy we have not the opposition and the battles which the French front and the Russian front faces - and feel grateful that the fortunes of war had placed us here. Nevertheless it's plenty hot here and can realize how much greater the battle and the casualties in the western front is.

Takeshi is ok. I saw him just the other day and also Gimei Takayasu - Dollar is well and all of our immediate church boys are well - but there are others which the War Department will notify in time.

If you don't hear from me right along - do not worry as I do not have the time to write very much. My job here in the lines is far behind enough to take us away from the immediate enemy fire and intense shelling - and usually the enemy does not bother to shoot at Chaplains. I always dig myself a slit trench no matter how tired I am by saying this is for my wife. I add several more inches for Peter and several for Jane - I feel that I owe it to you and the children to dig no matter how tired I am, and one day dug four times - I have more or less learned the safest kind to dig and where to dig to be secure so do not worry about me. I believe I have aged a lot as have many of us and have lost a lot of weight but feel fit otherwise.

The Germans are a crummy lot and not the superman they picture themselves to be. They are inhumanly brutal but once captured act like scared rabbits. We daily read the news from the Russian Front hoping that Russia would invade Germany soon and finish this crazy affair for us soon - they are nearest to Germany I believe right now. I admire the courage of our boys - and they are certainly game fellers.

When we were at Camp Shelby and received letters from the boys overseas hoping that we would not have to come to the front lines - it used to pass us by as a cry for wolf. Now I only can pass the same on to Shinso and the rest - hoping that they may never have to be called for I know now the quicker we get this finish, the happier those will be who have not as yet met the realities of war.



Now, in this spot I feel so at peace with the world. Flowers and trees blooming - occasional booming of big guns which often makes me cringe unconsciously. The American army has such a superiority of arms for which I am glad. The Germans may shell us say with fifty bursts and the American army gives them a thousand in retaliation. Just think of what the Germans are going through - it must be living hell for them.

As the boys come in from the lines I would anxiously scan the faces to see friends coming in - and sigh with relief as they pass by.... calling each one by name.

At this moment I am thinking of home and all the things I am going to do once at home - the picnics, yes - and the movies with Peter and the trips and car rides. I would give my right foot to be in Shelby now - army life is not all uniforms and dash and salutes.. thats just garrison life. Army life is going without sleep or a wash, without food - the same clothes - its sleeping in slit trenches in mud, in slime, in cold - its lying in fear - its blood and hatred. Some day the world will learn but not in our generation or Peter's that war is wrong. Let us hope and pray that Peter will not have to go through this...

Had a grand hot lunch today. I am planning to sleep here with this company this afternoon and drive up again nearer the lines - to my station. At the present moment I am in a large stone building several stories high so that I am very safe - safe as a rug in a bug as Peter used to say. Never fear dear, I always take precautions and try so that the probability of being a casualty is almost nil - and I always feel that I owe it to you and the kids.

Take care of yourself and if predictions are right we will be home again very soon.

love

Dad