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Image 1:

Somewhere in Italy
April 2, 1945

Dear Mother, Dad, and Grandpa,

I haven't written for about a week, but will now attempt to make up for it in part. You see, during the past week I have been quite busy, having been on a 4 day pass to the rest camp in Florence. And what a wonderful time I had down there! We have all had passes now, but the boys of our faith were given passes to coincide with the Passover holiday, so that made it doubly nice. We left last Monday and came back Friday night.

Before leaving I got my "[Eisenhower](#)" battle jacket which is issued to troops over here in place of the old-style blouse. It is much better looking. So once again I had to sew a shoulder patch on.

The most impressive gathering I have ever attended was the Seder in Florence last Wednesday night.

Please send some food whenever you care to.

Image 2:

(2) Somewhere in Italy
April 2, 1945

I mailed you a souvenir program of the service as well as the Haggadah that was used.

About 4000 Jewish boys attended the Seder which was highlighted by the appearance of Lt. Gen. Truscott, commanding general of the 5th Army. He delivered an excellent address and was praised by all for his remarks. It was quite dramatic as everyone came to attention when entered the hall. He then saluted us, spoke, after which the ceremony began. It was a long affair with blessings over this and that, etc. Plenty of sacramental wine brought from the States was consumed as well as tons of matzo. The meal was not large, salmon, onions, salad, a baked potato, and fruit cup being served to all. But it was the idea of being present at such a gathering that impressed us so very much. The hall, tables, etc. were beautifully decorated, and the table waiting was done by Italians^{dressed} in white jackets.

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Image 3:

(3) Somewhere in Italy
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It was probably the largest gathering of Jewish soldiers in the world. Chaplain Aaron Paplman presided. Maybe you have heard of him. He is very fine.

Being a lover of music, I had to go to the Florence opera house not once, but twice for the Tuesday and Thursday matinee performances of "La Traviata" and "Madam Butterfly" respectively. They were both done beautifully. It was thrilling to see and wonderful to hear, so much more so because the operas were being done in their native Italy. Before the performance the Italian, British, and American national anthems were played. The audience was mostly British and Canadian, although there were a number of Americans as well as Italian civilians. Incidentally, the Italians in Florence, a large percentage

at least, are very well educated and very charming. I sent you the opera programs and a magazine called "Music in Florence." You should find them very interesting.¹

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Image 4:

(4) Somewhere in Italy
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We saw a marvelous all G.I. variety show calls "Stars and Gripes" and "We're Off Again" a combination of 2 shows. It could very easily be a \$4.40 Broadway production. Of course all the entertainers are professionals—something like "This Is the Army." They were dressed in women's costumes, etc. One fellow did a take off on an actress in a nightclub telling about her experiences overseas while "entertaining the boys" that was terrific. Of course [Clare Boothe Luce](#) (who incidentally seems to have adopted the 5th Army) came in for a lot of good natured ribbing. I didn't get to see her when she was here recently, but the boys who did see her said that she is quite glamorous. They said she was attired in slacks, officer's coat, and turban. She smiled at everyone and was quite charming. She is doing a marvelous piece of work.

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Image 5:

(5) Somewhere in Italy
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Another show we saw was a U.S.O. unit on the stage plus "[Experiment Perilous](#)," a movie with Hedy Lamarr, Paul Lukas, and George Brent. It's very good.

We saw so many British and Canadian boys going to the R.A.F. show, so we thought we would see what it was like. Oh, was it awful.

The food in the rest center is swell. There are plates, individual tables, etc. – also music with every meal – a hot G.I. or Italian band. Scattered throughout the city are G.I. restaurants run by the Italian owners. They serve G.I. food. We had steak once and chicken once – both were excellent.

I did enjoy seeing the sights of Florence the "Cradle of Art." The Cathedral (Duomo) in the center of the city is gorgeous. Lenten services were going on when we were there. The Ponte Vecchio, an ancient covered bridge which the Germans spared is quite interesting. I sent you a water-color of it, Mother, for Mother's Day. Hope you like it. I also sent a water-color of the Duomo to Aunt Fannie.

Please send some food whenever you care to.

Image 6:

(6) Somewhere in Italy
April 2, 1945

She keeps writing and sending packages all the time, and I thought it would be nice to send her something.

Mother, I sent you a silk handkerchief for formal wear for your birthday. The things in the stores are beautiful. Food and clothing, however, are extremely high and of poor quality.

¹ Programs located in the scrapbook located in Jerome Epstein Collection, Box 16, George Mason University Special Collections Research Center.

I bought and sent home a pair of miniatures to hang on the wall hand painted ivories mounted in an ebony frame with gold trimming. I think they are beautiful and I hope you will like them.

Also I couldn't resist buying a piece of Capi di Monti to add to your collection. It's very hard to get even here in Italy.

I sent Mrs. Kemp a Crucifix – mother of pearl and silver. Tell her I haven't had the chance to get the Pope's autograph.

We took a walking tour one afternoon to the Pitti Palace the home of the Medici and also the former home of the King of Italy, Victor Emanuel II, father of the present Victor Emanuel, I believe. It is really a breath taking sight – just like a Hollywood setting. Please send some food whenever you care to do so.

Image 7:

(7) Somewhere in Italy
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The "Life" of March 5 which you sent me, Dad, has an article about a palace in Rome. It looks quite similar to this one. A Madam Caselli, a Red Cross representative working in the rest center conducts this tour every afternoon. She also took us through the magnificent Florentine gardens—the Boboli gardens. It is really something to see. Madam Caselli described everything in detail (speaks perfect English) and made it very enjoyable. She is quite charming. Has 2 girls, 7 and 9 yrs. Of age who are studying French, English, and music, among other things. She has never been to the States, but learned English at the university in Florence. I do wish I had a camera with me.

They were other tours conducted by a Prince Serge Obolensky which we wanted to take but which we didn't have the time for. He taught at N.Y.U. and at Columbia.

Well, I must come to a close. I'm afraid I haven't answered your letters in this, inasmuch as I have been writing about my experience. Also I haven't told you what packages, etc. I haven't received. Please send some food, by the way.

Image 8:

(8) Somewhere in Italy
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I must write about everything else tomorrow.
Isn't the war news wonderful?
Love to all of you.

Lovingly,
Jerome, Jr.