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Image 1:

Riva, Italy
May 13, 1945

Dear Mother, Dad, and Grandpa,

I can't begin to tell you how wonderful the past 2 weeks have been! Of course it all started with the unconditional surrender of the German forces in Italy and Austria. And it was indeed a blessing, for we are now in the Alps and a campaign here would have really been hard and bitter. When the surrender was announced we were living near the town of Malcesine on Lake Garda. It was a really gorgeous spot. Our area was a magnificent estate owned by a Swedish count and countess which was taken over by Marshall Kesselring for his headquarters and more recently, of course, by us.

Not far from there was Mussolini's villa which was captured by the 10th Division. You probably read about

Image 2:

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it in the papers. They say it is out of this world. A lot of the officers got silverware, paintings, etc. from the place.

We are at present in the famous resort town of Riva located in the Italian Alps on the north tip of Lake Garda. And it is perfect. I have never seen so many beautiful places. Riva is a wealthy town and was very swanky before the war, as were all these resorts around Lake Garda. Lake Garda and Lake Como, I believe, are the 2 most fashionable spots in Italy.

As you have no doubt noticed, we are not subject to censorship anymore. But even so, we of course can't divulge anything.

Well, Germany is "finito" as the Italians would say—and of course everyone is very happy about it. There was no wild celebration here like there was in the States, however.

Image 3:

(3)

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We all say that we will do our celebrating when we are home and have our discharge papers in our hands. No one knows what our future will be. Naturally there is Japan to be taken care of. But we don't know a thing. We are just hoping for the best. That's about all any one can do.

Today we had interviews for this point system. All they did was to have us check with them concerning our total number of points. I have the amazing total of 30! I can see myself in the Army years and years from now. No, on second thought, it's too horrible and gruesome to think about. Maybe in 50 years I'll get another stripe. But then I'd be tripping all over my beard. No bono (no good in Americano). Here's how my points stack up:

16 for 16 months service

4 " 4 " " overseas

10 " two battle stars

30 (Northern Apennines and Po Valley)

Image 4:

(4)

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The fellows with long overseas service and children are the ones who will benefit by this. Of course when Japan falls (and I hope it will be soon), I imagine everything will be changed!

Last week Col. Bernan came over to the Signal Co. to look me up. I thought that to be a very nice gesture on his part. We had a nice talk together. He is a very nice person – wanted to know how long I have been with the 10th, how I liked my work, Italy, etc. Said he was going to write Charlie. He thinks they tops—Charlie and Frieda, I mean. I saw him again Friday night in the Division CP. He is division surgeon.

We were living in a barracks up until a couple of days ago. Our area has a lot of buildings. It was a Fascist camp and resort of some sort until the Germans used it for a hospital.

Well anyway, Col. Bernan came around with his staff to inspect the place. He said it had a rancid odor—too many men in one place—

Image 5:

(5)

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so he ordered our C.O.—Capt. Crouch—to move us out. So we have our beds lined in an orderly manner in the open field near the lake. It was my section that had to move out—so we now call ourselves the “rancid radio section.” For weeks during combat we lived in filth, and all of a sudden he comes along and finds a rancid odor. Silly, isn’t it?

It is certainly a relief not to have to worry about shells, air-bursts, bombing, strafing, etc. We were shelled plenty and let me tell you it is some feeling to lie in a foxhole and hear those artillery shells come screaming in. I hate to talk about it. You just lie there praying and shaking and trembling with fear. All of us admit we were scared—there is not one person who says he wasn’t afraid. The Germans had plenty and they used it. Our favorite song was “How We Hate to See That Evening Sun Go Down” for the Krauts threw the book at us at night. You see, during the day our planes could spot their positions and we could knock them out either by artillery or bombing.

Image 6:

(6)

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But at night all Hell broke loose. But during the big offensive we had it day and night. I slept under a truck quite often when we had no time to dig a foxhole. Neither affords much protection. It’s just luck. And in the Po Valley we were bombed and strafed, and then we would read in the papers about the Germans having no planes!

One time in the Po Valley we were riding along in a convoy when all of a sudden someone yelled “German convoy ahead!” We jumped into a ditch wildly, not knowing what was coming off. I had visions of a Panzer division coming down the road. Some of the men organized themselves and were prepared to shoot it out. Several of us then moved across a field into a ditch in front of a farm house. We lay there and waited. We could hear the Germans giving orders to their men. Finally a couple of our tanks moved up. They captured some of the Krauts and dispersed the rest. We were lucky there were no

Image 7:

(7)

Riva, Italy
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snipers in that house.

Every few miles we would have to stop on account of snipers. And the Krauts were surrendering in droves. No one had time to capture them and guard them, so they were disarmed and sent down the roads to the rear by themselves. You should have seen the “supermen” running madly down the roads with their hands behind their heads being jeered by the Partisans and the Italian women who spit on them and thumbed their noses at them. The Partisans did a wonderful job. The Krauts are deathly afraid of them. Those were glorious days. Italians lined to roads clapping and cheering as we went by—“viva Americano,” “Tedeschi kaput, finito,” “we have waited so long”—those were typical remarks. When we stopped they gave us “vino,” “bread,” “eggs,” etc.—you see, the Po Valley is the richest area of Italy. They kissed us—one big burly, filthy Italian threw his arms around me. The Italian flag was flying from every house.

Image 8:

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We went so fast that often we became lost and never knew whether we were in our territory or that of the enemy. Often we were only an hour or less behind the infantry and had to stop and wait while the towns were cleared of snipers.

We rode for two days straight . We often moved the division C.P. twice a day.

The Krauts made a desperate stand at the Po River, but it did them no good. We went on and on, straight into the Alps.

Then came the surrender, and with it that grand feeling of relief and thankfulness. And our thoughts turned to those who did so much to make this undecipherable could write volumes more but must come to a close sometime turned to those who did so much to make this victory possible –those who will never come back.

Mother, today is Mother’s Day and I do wish I could be with you. But I think we have a lot to be thankful for in spite of everything. Better days are coming I’m sure. The past 4 months have been difficult and yet wonderful. I’ve had so many horrible and marvelous experiences. I know this won’t make sense to you, but it’s hard to explain.

Love to you, Mother, on your day,

Image 9:

(9)

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and my very best to you all.

Lovingly,
Jerome, Jr.

Intro/Internship description

V-E day

No wild celebration

-view of war of soldiers

Other quote

-historical context

No idea war would end so fast

-Point system

-quote on "years from now"...actual discharge date

-other example of archival serendipity

April 17th letter

Censorship

Back to V-E letter.

End on quote on those who sacrificed.

~~include 2 down 1 to go?~~