



NAVY DEPARTMENT
WASHINGTON

April 9, 1945

Dearest Folks,

This letter is a little slow in being composed, but I was a little snowed under last week with duties and stuff and this seems to be my first opportunity to write. But I've lots to tell!

Friday I was off from the office to have my eyes tested. The last two weeks they have bothered me considerable--just the usual burning from eye-strain. All incoming mail is photographed in the mail room and small V-Mail-size prints of the letters are made and sent to us to link up with the outgoing letters from Chief of Naval Operations. These are usually quite difficult to read. However I never fail to read them and often times read them when Mr. Whaley and Miss Mentzer can't. I told the optimitrist this and he said it wasn't that I couldn't see--it was eye-strain from seeing under adverse conditions. He recommended "rest glasses" to wear while doing this work and while at movies. I was able to read all of the charts that he showed me, but my left eye is weaker than my right. For work--taking glasses on and off, he recommended the (rose shell) frame glasses which cost \$14 and the rimless ones worn by people who must wear them all of the time cost (for my type of lens) \$16. Thus I'll be wearing rimmed glasses beginning Tuesday when they will be made up. I laughed and told Lorraine and Mary that I'm fading fast--teeth trouble and now glasses. But you know the old saying when you go--you go quickly! Hal

I had all of Friday p.m. off because the eye examination did not take long. I cleaned the house from top to bottom and when it's clean I felt that I should have company. Phoned the Devonshire girls that night and invited them on the picnic I planned for Sunday afternoon. Tried to phone Estelle Williams SPAR barracks all night and line was always busy. So



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I wrote her a special delivery invitation and said if I did not hear from her I would be expecting her at the apt., with or without a SPAR friend. Sunday four of the boarding girls came out and we waited and waited for E.W. Finally I called barracks and got her. The letter had not been delivered. She pinned me down for dinner one night this week and we agreed on Tuesday night. She was nice and friendly, but she struck the wrong note when she hung up, saying, "Well, I'll see you Tues. night, Eva, hon." Calling me "hon" and she has never even seen me!

I was up at the crack of dawn on Sunday making potato salad. Mary made the dressing for me which saved me neck. The picnic was a huge success. We went to Fort Dupont Park (out in South East Wash.) and the weather was fine--sunny with a touch of a cool breeze to make hot dogs taste good. Had hot dogs, buns, mustard, pickles, potato salad, cookies and lemonade-- and baked beans (from the can). Mighty tasty!

Saturday night Bill and I went to the program given by repatriated POWs and two escaped Japanese prisoners. The AAF band played till 8:15 when the program began. Two German PW and one Jap PW spoke, telling of their experiences and I absorbed every word. I wish the rest of the Fowlers could have been there to hear also. Following that the next-of kin met in the group under the camp placard in which you were interested---like a convention with all of the signs. About 2,000 people attended. Two 1st Lts. were from Stalag Luft I and they were very nice in answering any and all questions. When they had satisfied us all they said to bring up photographs and mention names and they would see if they could recognize any of them. Neither knew Robert by name and I didn't have snap shot with me. But I really have the



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word on Stalag Luft I. It is located right on the Baltic as water can be seen on both sides of the camp. The camp is divided into three ^{Compounds} contonments-- south, north and east and one never leaves his contonment. (which accounts for PW's not knowing Robert.) The Lt. said there were 40,000 there. The camp is surrounded by a 10 or 12 ft. fence of barbed wire and outside that is a continual patrol of guards. Thirty feet inside that is a wire and if a prisoner steps five feet inside the wire, the guard shoot to kill. If a prisoner escapes and is recaptured, he is put in soltaire, on bread and water, from 20 to 25 days. Inside this wire are four towers at each corner (25 ft. high) with day and night guards equipped with rifles, machine guns and searchlights. The guards at Stlag Luft I are old men--usually veterans from the Russian front. They ~~do~~ do not bother the prisoners and the prisoners do not bother them.--stricly impersonal. This is the camp to be in as it will not be forced on the march, not being in anyone's drive. It is the Lt's belief that the boys will not be liberated by the Russians and there is nothing ing that area of military value for the Russians to desire. Stetting is what they wanted and got as it controls all incoming trade from Baltic down the Oder. The food is exactly as given in the article that Barb sent me--breakfast a quart of hot water, lunch barley or cabbage soup with two slices of brown bread (40% wood) and for dinner three potatoes. The Red Cross and personal pgs come in and will probably continue to do so as shipping on the Baltic is convenient and the boys in the inland camps will not be so lucky. On Easter morning, 1944 big bombers (allied) came over Stalag Luft I in a steady stream for three hours and that was enough to cheer any boy's heart. Big tears rolled down most of their cheeks. Morale is high with the men and after a period of time learn to take advantage of ways to pass the time profitably. Among



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themselves they establish a sort of government--electing a head officer every 6 months. "If you folks think you have ~~campaign~~ speeches over ~~er~~ here you should hear the ones over there!!" Many fellows receive cablegrams that they are fathers and before dinner that night they must make a speech--and what speeches.' Fellows get to know the guards and recognize them, having names for all of them as Looie, the Lope, Dead-Eye Dan and etc. They have a commissary among the men and if you receive something you don't like--salmon or something, you take it to commissary and trade it for something else. Everything has point value based on cigarettes. Candy bars may have a value of 50 cigarettes and even some PW doesn't smoke he'll take the cigarettes ^(in personal pkg.) for exchange value. If cigarettes are scarce point value goes up and if there are lots of them, values goes down---you know what I mean in case I have this mixed.

Before being assigned to one's permanent camp most men are sent to Dulag Luft, the interregation camp for questioning. One PW was from Chicago and he said the Germany officer who questioned him had spent years on the North side of Chicago and knew it better than he did and asked him if somebody was still playing on the Chicago Cubs. Regardless of where you are from they'll have an officer there from you area to question you. Lots of silly questions are asked and lots of silly answers come back. But over and over you just say rank, name and serial number, over and over. If they think you know something and may talk they put you in solitary confinement with bread and water and turn the heat on. This officer was in for 15 days. Before the quizzers again he heard one little gunner being asked for the humpteenth time about how many gunners were on his B-17 and finally the little lad said, "To tell you the truth we have fourteen gunners and two score-keepers!"



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If ones mail ceases coming then you know probably that your boy's mail has too. But they have been waiting months for this. The C.O. in camps have told them the invasion is coming sometime and the sooner your mail stops coming and pkgs stop coming the sooner the war will be over. At Stalag Luft III (which has been moved from fire of Russians) the Colonel nearly two years ago made his men each month put aside something for a reserve and ever so often the Colonel inspected this hidden supply to make certain the men were keeping it up and not eating it. When Stalag Luft III went on the march, they had two months hidden supply of food with them.

Stalag Luft I has a good organization---library, lots of athletic equipment and musical instruments.

I am sending Duna a carbon of this so he too will know. It's time to fly the coop now, but at another time I want to tell you the story told by the Jap prisoner.

Bye now

Love,

Louise

Louise.