

William J Roberts Jr

Born July 17, 1925

US Army, 3rd Army, 65th Division, 3rd Battalion, HQ Company, 261st Infantry Regiment, served as a radio operator during the war.

He was inducted into the Army on November 9, 1943 at 18 years old. Sent to Europe on January 10, 1945, he didn't return to the United States until April 27, 1946, when he was 21 years old. He was discharged from the military on May 2, 1946 at Fort Dix, New Jersey achieving the rank of Staff Sergeant.

Army induction on November 9, 1943 after graduating from high school in June and turning 18 years old in July. He was sent to basic training at Camp Upton in Yaphank, New York on Long Island on December 1, 1943 and then to Camp Shelby in Hattiesburg, Mississippi for orientation and further training. He was sent to Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia on March 16, 1944 for a 13 week advanced radio training course.

He was sent back to Camp Shelby on March 18, 1944 until December 1944, when his unit finished their training and he was sent overseas to the European theatre of operations.

Arriving in LeHavre, France on January 21, 1945, his unit set up at camp Lucky Strike located near Cany, France before moving out to fight the war in Europe. Fighting across France, Germany and into Austria at the end of the war, his division met the Russians in Enns, Austria on May 9, 1945, with both sides celebrating victory over the surrender of the German military. His friend William Morgan was wounded in Neuhaus, Germany on May 4/5, 1945 and his friend Edward Dowling was killed in action at Eferding, Austria on May 4, 1945. He narrowly avoided injury himself when a German 88 millimeter shell exploded 50 feet from him during the battle of Regensburg, Germany and the crossing of the Danube River on April 25/27, 1945.

As a member of the Army of occupation after the war, he was able to travel on furlough to Nice, France and also the site of Hitler's home in Berchtesgaden,

Germany. Fearing he would be sent to the Pacific Theatre of Operations and the invasion of Japan, since he didn't have enough points to be sent home, he and all members of the military were relieved when Japan surrendered on August 14, 1945. He left Europe on April 17, 1946 and arrived back in the United States on April 27, 1946, 21 years old. His dream was to go to college on the GI bill, since his family had no money for college. He realized his dream in 1951, graduating from Colgate University in Hamilton, New York (after transferring from Sienna College in Loudonville, NY) with a degree in economics.

Letters home from war:

From Private William J Roberts Jr:

Dec 1, 1943 – Camp Upton, NY – Dear La: My first day was a success. We got up at 5:30. I didn't sleep too well. The meals aren't bad. We got most of our clothes. We got our tests too. We get our shots tomorrow, all through processing on Thursday.

Dec 3, 1943 – Camp Upton, NY – Dear La: We finished our processing this morning about 10:00. Boy have we got a tough Sergeant. I left barracks at 11:20 for lunch and it took us half an hour in line to get in the mess hall. At 12:30 I started out on a big trailer truck. We went salvaging bottles, tin cans and egg cartons. We went all over camp. Boy is it big. I'm a little tired and I think I've got 16 hours of KP tomorrow.

Dec 5, 1943 – Camp Upton, NY – Dear La; We stayed on KP last night until 11:40 and were up at 5:30 this morning. Right after breakfast we got our detail and what should it be. KP again from 8:00 in the am until I think 6:00 or 7:00 tonight. I'm writing this from the mess hall. Boy is it tough. You're going every minute. I don't know when I'll be shipped from here. I'll be glad to get South, it's pretty cold here and I've got a swell cold. I think I'll be ok in a couple of days. Don't worry.

From Private William Roberts, HQ Company, 261st Infantry:

Dec 13, 1943 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear La: I went to orientation (lectures) most all of yesterday and played softball part of the afternoon. After chow, I became a waiter. The fellows that have been here for 4 months had a party. Some WACS were supposed to come but they stood the boys up, so it turned into a stag party. They had fried chicken and it was good. I stuffed myself I guess. Our Captain and two of our Lieutenants were there. After the feed they went over to the day room and drank beer all night. I had a glass, but it turned my stomach so I went to bed. Our hut is well located. The mess hall is right next to us, the day room (recreation hall) is right across the street and the CO's office is right behind us. It was funny, one of the boys in my hut who has an upper bunk right across from mine (I've got an upper too). Well, he forgot he was in an upper and stepped out. He landed right on his face; he only got a cut though. I slept till 8:00 this morning but didn't get out of bed until 10:00. I went to church this morning and was very nice. The chapel is just around the corner. The PX is down the street about a block.

Dec 17, 1943 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear La: Gosh, here it is almost Christmas and who'd a thunk it. The weather has been swell so far this week, except for today, it rained a little. This afternoon I took my second radio test and an electrical test. The radio is doubtful but the electrical looks good. I'll know for sure next week probably. Right after lunch I had two more shots. I thought I'd drop, but in a few minutes they stopped aching and I feel fine now. I think I've got a couple of more to go. Monday night I went to the movies and I'm going tonight again.

Dec 23, 1943 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear La: What a day. We woke up at 6:00 and was it cold. We wore our windbreakers with our overcoats over them. We did calisthenics about 2 hours and then took a test for driving Army vehicles. After lunch we got another needle, our blood type and a vaccination and is my arm lame now. I can hardly move it, but it will be ok tomorrow. After this we went for a hike 2 ½ miles, probably closer to three with packs and rifles. When we got back we played softball. I'm the catcher of our team and pounded out 3 hits, bringing in 7 runs in all. By now my arm begins to ache but I manage to get back to my hut. We stood retreat again tonight and the Captain of our company inspected us. There was a hair in the breach of my rifle and a little grit in the

chamber. He told me how to clean it, so again tonight I cleaned my gun. I don't know how, but I will. One of the Sergeants from another hut is in tonight helping us. They're a swell bunch of fellows. I got an extra insignia down to the PX the other night. It took me $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour to sew one on last night, I bet you can do much better. I sure wish you were here to sew the rest of them on. Any mail will be well received, and any packages containing cookies, candy, pickles, etc. Just a hint, so long for now.

Dec 28, 1943 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear Dad: Well, Christmas has come and gone but I didn't do so bad. Friday noon they called mail and much to my surprise there were 3 packages for me and 9 letters. Boy some fun. The only thing was that I had KP all that day and up till 8:00 o'clock. Boy was I tired, my arms felt as though they were going to fall off and my head ached so much I couldn't move. I didn't get a chance to open my packages until 8:45. Everything is just about gone, including Mrs. DeMott's cookies that came yesterday. Saturday we had a swell dinner. Turkey, potatoes, peas, corn, bread, pie, candy, coffee and all the trimmings. I had just finished eating and was in the process of lighting a butt, when Hank Vanderminden walks by my table. I just hollered all over the place and then neither of us said anything. After about 3 minutes I went to a half empty table and sat him down to eat. After he ate we went to the service club and for a walk around part of the camp. We went to a movie and Sunday morning I got my pass and we both went to Hattiesburg. We were there from about 11:00 until 8:00. We stayed at the USO most of the time except for a show in the afternoon and a concert in the evening at the USO. The city isn't much, it's very dirty. We broke up at about 8:00 and I was back to camp by 8:45. Boy and I'm telling you; all my loneliness has gone up in a cloud. Monday we started our radio code practice. I passed lesson one the first time so today I started lesson two. For the time being I am a messenger, but will probably be a radio operator after basic starts. Joe Louis is putting on an exhibition tonight up the street, but I want to go over and practice code. By the way, I am with division communications but it is just tentative. I'll know in a month or so.

Jan 20, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear La: Division school started Monday and is pretty good. We go in the morning, having 3 hours of code and 1 hour of

lecture. At the beginning of the 5th week we start school in the afternoon. I just finished my 2 afternoons of KP. The way they work it now is school in the morning and details in the pm. We have to take 2 half days of any detail we are assigned to. My KP is over, except for Sunday, for a while. In code I am up to 7 words per minute and have got 6 to add to that yet. I hope I can keep it up. Tomorrow we go out in the pm for a 4 hour hike, but they haven't bothered me yet so I guess I can take that. They went through the gas chamber today but I missed it because I was on KP. I also had a shot. It didn't bother me a bit. I think I am caught up for a year, though I am not sure.

Feb 25, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear La: I have got another morning of KP this morning wasn't bad. I am only on from 5:30 to 11:30. That is much better than all day, which sometimes goes up to 8:30. Boy it is getting hot and muggy now and we get a shower just about every day. I am getting 15 wpm. Pretty good, I turned in one paper with 3 complete messages and only had 8 mistakes. Get that down to 2 or 3 and I will go to 20 wpm. We are sending now, and it is quite simple. We finished our last class on radio sets today, so I guess we will have a test Saturday. I hope I get a good mark. We have a radio in our day room now, so it makes it very nice for everyone.

March 2, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS- Dear La: Well, here it is the middle of our 9th week and only 4 to go, and just two more of radio. Beginning Monday we take up all our practical work, like setting up our radios and operating them with all those in the regiment. And then we will go out in jeeps with them. That is where the fun begins. Beginning tonight and every night up to Friday of next week we have review of basic subjects. Friday we have a Division test which determines if we have learned our basic subjects well enough. If we haven't we begin basic all over, but I think everything will go over ok. I have got pretty good marks in all the other tests on those subjects. I have some grand news coming for you next week, please don't worry.

March 13, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear Dad: Well I guess it is safe to tell you now. About 3 weeks ago I had just come back from school in the pm. I was putting my notes in my locker and I hear the 1st Sergeant holler for two fellows.

I missed the first name, but the second was Dowling. The fellows said he wanted Roberts and Dowling. Well, this Dowling had been getting in a lot of trouble with the non coms and had been getting gigged for this and that, so when I heard my name with his I thought for sure I was going to get night detail for something. Well then, I went to the Captain's office to see what was up. Sgt Finlayson said Lt Midgett wanted to see us and low and behold, asked us if we wanted to go to Fort Benning, Georgia to take a 13-week advanced course in radio. Well, who was I to turn down a chance like this? I looked at Dowling and he looked at me, we both just nodded. Lt Midgett said we would go somewhere around the 15th of March. There were certain qualifications that we had met so he picked the two of us. There are only 3 out of the Division going this time, so I consider myself pretty lucky for 2 reasons. One, it meant no KP or any detail for 13 weeks. No reveille or retreat, no hikes, just 13 weeks of school, eight hours a day (there are night courses though). The second reason is that the Regiment is going to send 100 men to a POR - port of replacement - right after basic training. Right now, that doesn't appeal to me, but it probably will in 13 weeks, because one fellow who had just come back from Benning was only here 2 weeks and then sent to a POR in Maryland. So, you can see I've gotten a couple of breaks so far. We had to fire on the range before we could go, so yesterday we went out. There were just the two of us firing on the range where there are 300 targets. It was raining and muddy and everything was dirty, especially my rifle. We had 9 fellows helping us. 4 on targets, 2 on telephones, 2 as coaches, scorekeepers and a driver. Lt Midgett came along to help. He's a swell guy. We had been getting special training for the last 3 weeks in marksmanship, so we were to an advantage. As it was, I qualified expert, getting 180 out of a possible 200. Dowling qualified expert too. Another lucky break for us. One other thing, I got my first stripe last week. \$4.00 bucks a month. I will wire you the day I go Dad and you can tell La. I'll send you my new address as soon as I get it.

March 18, 1944 – Fort Benning, GA – Dear La: I left Camp Shelby at about 9 pm Thursday night with the other 2 fellows that were coming for the radio course. We got here about 3 pm yesterday. The trip wasn't bad. We had to travel in coaches all the way. I got a little sleep, however. We stopped over in

Birmingham, Alabama for about an hour. It's a rather nice city. This camp is beautiful. Some difference from Shelby. The barracks are four stories high and made of brick and cement. The grounds are all seeded and there are trees all over. It looks like a college. Four buildings form a circle. It's about 600 yards across baseball fields, volleyball courts, it's really swell. It will be a 13-week vacation. No KP or any detail, no long hikes with packs, just 8 hours of school, 6 days a week. For the first 2 weeks, starting Monday we go to school from 5:45 am to 12:45. From then on, we are free to do as we please. We will get some homework. It looks like a tough course from all the training manuals they gave us. This afternoon we have an orientation class, then we will find out what's ahead of us for the next 13 weeks. It's funny not to see your old gang around. I miss them a little, but I'll get used to it all after a while.

March 27, 1944 – Ft Benning, GA – Dear Jeanette: We have finished our first week of school. It wasn't bad. One more week on am shift and then 2 weeks of the pm shift. I looked up a fellow from my company who has been here about 3 months and graduates a week from tomorrow. It was nice to see someone from the old outfit. Yes, I was homesick when I first got here, but am feeling ok now. You have to do something to keep your mind occupied so I am starting to catch up on my reading. Last Tuesday afternoon when I was really feeling low down, I decided to call Dad. I talked rather long, but it was swell to hear him. It was like calling from the golf course and telling him I would be late for supper. I think I'll call again in a month or so if he doesn't mind. Next weekend we are free from 12:30 noon Saturday until 12 noon Monday, so maybe I'll take a run up to Atlanta. They say it is a nice city. It depends on whether we get paid Friday or not. I still have \$25.00 left; it should hold me.

March 28, 1944 – Ft Benning, GA – Dear La: I had a swell day yesterday. I looked up a fellow from my company who is in class 40. We talked for 3 or 4 hours. Had a swell steak dinner at the mess hall, took in the show in the pm and then talked another hour or 2 and separated. It was nice to see him. Yes, I was very lonesome when I first got here. I missed the fellows and there wasn't anything to do so I had too much time to think, I guess. However, I feel much better now and am beginning to really enjoy this life. This morning we went out in the

training area for a four-hour compass problem. We had to make a sketch map. Mine wasn't the best, but it wasn't the worst, so I guess it is ok. Tomorrow 10:30 to 12:30 we have a 2-hour test on all the map reading we have had. It counts towards graduation. I think I'll get it ok though. I'll have to do a little reviewing tonight.

April 25, 1944 – Ft Benning, GA – Dear Jeanette: School is going fine. We are in our 6th week with only 6 or 7 to go. I put in my "delay in route" last Friday. I'll know in a month or so if I get it. I hope I can get home for your graduation. I can get a streamliner from Atlanta to New York for \$40.00, if you want to loan me some dough. I'll probably need it while I am home or to get back to camp. I don't know where the outfit will be by then. Maybe still in Shelby – I hope not. It is getting hot as the devil down there already. Not that it isn't hot here – much. We changed into our "suntans" yesterday and went out to see another bombing and strafing demonstration. It was much better than the one we had at Shelby. The only drawback was that it rained cats and dogs before we got in. I poured about 2 tablespoons of water out of my shoes. Today isn't so bad. It rained some this morning, but it is swell out now. I guess I am going to have my tooth pulled next Saturday. I hope so.

April 25, 1944 – Ft Benning, GA – Dear La: I am going to have my wisdom tooth pulled next Saturday. Another fellow in my class had the same trouble and he had his out last Saturday. He said it didn't bother him a bit, so I am not worrying about it. School is going ok. I got a B and a B- on my tests. Yesterday we went out to see another bombing demonstration, it was very interesting. On the way back it started to rain cats and dogs. I had brought my raincoat, but still my feet got soaked. I could pour water out of my shoes. We started wearing our suntans yesterday. They are much cooler than the olive drabs.

June 2, 1944 – Ft Benning, GA – Dear La: It is getting so terrifically hot down here now, it just about puts you to sleep. We go out in the field every day now for "field sets" so it isn't too bad. We go out at 3:15 and come in at 9:30 pm. Time really flies when you are out there. Well just think, we graduate two weeks from next Tuesday. I can hardly wait. I am almost sure of getting my

“delay in route” but of course anything can happen in the Army. I wish you would send my money down to me. \$45.00 will be enough. I’ll probably be home sometime June 22nd and I’ll hitchhike in from Comstock. Don’t worry about me, because there are about 50 fellows in my class going to New York, so we’ll have a swell time. See you soon I hope, tell Jeanette she owes me a letter.

August 10, 1945 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear La: Things are going pretty well, at first it was rather difficult. I had quite a bit of back work to make up. I don’t think I will be getting a rating for quite a while. All the fellows got there’s while I was in school, and by the time I got back, they had given them all out, so I guess I’ll have to wait. I think I’ll be getting something pretty soon though. The weather is lousy down here now. It is terrifically hot now and you are never dry. It rains for about one day out of the week. It is pouring now. Last week we had a dress parade, and it poured like cats and dogs. Everyone was soaked to the skin. We spend a day- a night – and a morning in the field every week now having communications problems. This will be our second. We were out a whole week about 2 weeks ago. It wasn’t bad. No one got much sleep, and the bugs were terrific. One night they made us sleep in foxholes – and of course it rained – I almost got flooded out before I could climb out. What a night. I was going to send \$20.00 up to you but have decided to go on a 3-day pass to New Orleans. I need a military wristwatch very badly in my work, so if the \$30.00 isn’t enough, have Dad give you the money to make it up. I told him to use that money to get a good one. A cheap one won’t last a month down here, and I don’t want to ruin my good one.

August 24, 1944 - Camp Shelby, MS – Dear La: By now you will have received my card and know that I am safely back in camp. Must close for now, as the Commanding Officer is on his way over here. Thanks, loads for the dough and please don’t worry about me. I had a wonderful time.

August 25, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear Jeanette: I would like you to do a favor for me when you get back to school – in your spare time. I don’t think I don’t think I could find the time to write this in camp. It’s about me going to college. Saturday during our hour of orientation Lieutenant Hall read us some of

the G.I. Bill of Rights. Of course, the one that interested me the most was the part about education. There are only two requirements to the plan. The first is that you must qualify or meet the entrance requirement to the particular college or university of your choice. The second is that you must show that being drafted – or the national emergency as they call it, has interrupted or prevented your college career. This later one shouldn't be too difficult, however the first one is the one I want you to help me with. I think my average was high enough to get me in most colleges, but I want to make sure. Would you go to the high school and get my marks for my 4 years of high school and find out from the following colleges if they are high enough to allow my taking entrance exams. I will list the schools in the order as to which I would like most to attend: Dartmouth, Union, Cornell, Princeton, Syracuse. Also find out from the above colleges if they allow service men to take entrance exams while in the service, to use when they get out. Also, find the expenses of each. I hope this won't be too much bother for you, but it looks like a pretty good chance for me to get to college. The government pays for every year you spend in the service, and I am almost good for a year already. Take your time on it and let me know what verdict you get from each one. I think you could handle things better up there than I could down here.

August 31, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear La: Been terrifically busy this week. Up at 3:30 and in from the field at 6:30. Monday a few of us put on a demonstration for the Colonel. He liked it very much. We are going out in the field for a test on communications problems. Boy am I exhausted. We are going on maneuvers in about 4 or 5 weeks in some other state.

September 7, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear La: We have been very busy here these past 2 weeks. We are having inspections everyday this week, and we didn't get Sunday off. The hours have been terrific, and I am really tired. We are getting Monday off and some of the fellows are going to New Orleans. I may go with them. Has Jeanette told you about my plans for college after the war? I think I stand a pretty good chance to go. Jen is going to work on my applications in her spare time. Oh yes, I almost forgot to tell you, I have my teeth all fixed now. I had two appointments this week and had 4 filled.

September 15, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear Jeanette: Things are happening fast around here, we don't know what's going to happen the next day. Getting last Monday off was just such a thing. The whole company got the weekend off, we found out about it on Friday. About half the fellows went to New Orleans, and I didn't want to hang around, so I went too. There won't be any more day passes or 24-hour leaves. We'll probably be put on the alert any day. I've got my fingers crossed for one more furlough. It is very questionable, as I got back from my last one in July, and I don't think I rate another. I had a swell time in New Orleans and would like to go again, but that is out. Thanks, loads for sending for those college catalogs for me, I'll let you know when I get them, and give you my choice. We are having a company party in a few minutes, but I don't think I will stay long. The weather changed pretty quick and I've got a terrific head cold.

October 1, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear La: Received your letter the same day I got the watch. Boy I really do like it and is keeping perfect time, just the kind I wanted. We are going to be in the field all this week, so I won't have time to do much letter writing. Beginning the second of November, we will be out for about 30 days. That is going to be rough. This past week we had a couple of rough nights. Monday night we had a forced 9-mile march. I almost didn't make it. We did it in 1 hour, 54 minutes. Friday, we had our 25-mile hike. I made it ok. Very tired but no blisters. I am now caught up with all hikes, etc. I got 2 pair of GI glasses last week, so I have 3 pairs now. Beginning with our November 30 pay I'm having \$25.00 taken out of my pay and sent to the bank back home. When my pay increases, or I am in a theatre where I can't spend money, I'll have as much as possible sent home. This way I'll have a few hundred when I get out and it will come in handy if I get to go to college.

October 1, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear Jeanette: Last week they fumigated the mess hall and we had to eat out of mess kits. This coming week we are going to be in the field. I am having \$25.00 taken out of my pay every month starting with November. It will be sent to the bank and put into my account. If I ever get into a theatre of operations, I'll double the amount. It will be very handy to have a few hundred in the bank for college when I get out. If anything should

happen to me, Dad will get it all. I have received the BU, Syracuse and Dartmouth bulletins, and of those 3, Dartmouth appeals to me the most. I have read everything on business administration and like it very much. I think I'll stick to it. I would like you to write to them and see if my marks would warrant them letting me in after the war.

October 8, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear La: We were in the field all last week, sleeping on the ground. We will be going out for one more week this month and the 5th of November. We will go out until the 8th of December. I expect to get a furlough the 8th of December so I will probably be home the 9th or 10th. I won't be there for Christmas Day as I'll have to be back here the 23rd. I am going to New Orleans Saturday or maybe Friday night for the weekend. Tulane University is playing Rice University Saturday pm and I would like to see a good football game this year. I hope you don't think I am getting into any trouble down there. Please don't worry about me, I can take care of myself now.

October 16, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear La: The weather has changed. I am sleeping at night with two blankets and a comforter. We have to keep a fire going all night. The days are warm, but most of us are wearing woolen underwear. Last weekend I was out in the field with the 3rd battalion helping them on one of their problems. Last Thursday I was on an umpire detail with a radio. The Major I was with was a very nice fellow. The very last thing I was with him, he was talking to our Division Co. Major General Reinhart, he asked my opinion of the problem, and I was so nervous I could hardly speak. Sorry to hear about the "duck", poor John, after a hard day of hunting, having his efforts go up in smoke. That reminds me of a Thanksgiving Day a long time ago.

November 5, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear La and Hughie: I spent last weekend in New Orleans again. Morgan and I went together. We had a wonderful time. We had from noon Saturday until noon Monday. We hitchhiked down and got a ride right away. The same fellow gave us a ride back. Morgan drove halfway back, and I drove the other half. We didn't have to pay a cent for our transportation.

December 11, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear Jeanette: Well, once again those rumors are going around, and I think it is for keeps this time. Don't say anything to La as I may be able to get home for a few hours in a few weeks. Anyway, I ought to be able to call and I'll tell her then. Gee – they just played "I'll be home for Christmas" and it sure made me homesick for a few seconds. We had a very busy week this past one. Mostly inspections and tests. Our Regiment came through on top, per usual. I passed my radio tests ok but not without a great loss of "blood, sweat and tears." I spent the past weekend in town with Morgan. Had a swell time. No dates, but about 3 shows and a dance. Don't think I'll get to New Orleans again, so I'll have to be satisfied with Hattiesburg (the hole).

December 11, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear La: Last week we had a few inspections and they kept us very busy. I spent the weekend in town with Morgan. Had a swell time. I expect to have my picture taken this week. I am suffering from a few pimples and a mustache, so as soon as they are both gone, I'll see what can be done to my homely puss. Received the box you sent so am enclosing a note to thank them for it. Have Jeanette check this and see if it is ok: Dear Ladies, received your box last week and wish to thank you all for your kindness. Quite a few of the fellows enjoyed it and they too send their thanks. Things of that nature are morale lifters for we GI's who will not be home for Christmas.

December 14, 1944 – Camp Shelby, MS – Dear Jeanette: I got your swell box. We got about 4 boxes the same day, so that night we had a feast – and it was a feast. Today was the end of your box – I stretched it as far as I could. Well, our moving orders have been cancelled again, the 6th time, and everyone is wild. Everything is "snafu" and I am slowly going stark raving mad. I've been working on officers' stuff, and today we were just finishing off one of our 2nd Lieutenants when we noticed we had his Army serial number wrong on everything. I mean there was hell raised. I chewed the T/5 who cut the stencil for about 5 minutes, then one of the boys went to work fixing everything up. Boy I'll be glad when this is over.

From Dad's field notes: Boarded USS LeJeune January 9, 1945 in New York harbor, sailed at 0400 hours on January 10th. Arrived LeHavre, France and to Camp Lucky Strike on January 22, 1945. Left Camp Lucky Strike on March 2, 1945.

Dad's unit would have been transferred from Camp Shelby, MS to the Army installation, Camp Shanks, in Orangetown, New York, just North of NYC, prior to departure for Europe. It was one of the major staging and final field inspection areas for troops departing the US.

From Corporal William J Roberts Jr:

February 6, 1945 – Somewhere in France!! – Dear Jeanette: Speaking of boxes, better send one of soap, tooth powder, shaving cream - AND food. Anything that is ration free. Today we were going to go to a French town, but we got lost enroute, therefore we had to come back and clean the mud off ourselves. Some fun? I've been living on 2 putrid meals a day for a month now and am getting tired and hungry. Write again soon and don't mind my griping.

February 17, 1945 – Somewhere in France! – Dear La and Hughie: Just a short letter to let you know I am ok. I think Joyce will like California if everything Morgan tells me is true. If she is anywhere near Los Angeles, I'll send her his address and she can say hello to his folks for me. The weather has greatly improved since my last letter. The last 3 or 4 days have been swell. The afternoons aren't as warm as our June afternoons. Last night I went on pass again. Had a good time and learned a few new French words. Before I leave here, I should have the lingo fairly pat.

February 25, 1945 – Somewhere in France! – Dear Dad and Jessie: We have been busy eye washing this place for a General. I really don't know why we straightened ditches, leveled the ground and worked for about 20 hours getting ready for him – and then – he didn't come anywhere near our area. I guess that is all we are going to do while here – dig and straighten ditches. Oh yes – I had KP one day this week. I think it was the easiest KP I have ever had in my army carrier – and here's hoping the rest will be easy. Well, we went to town last

night again. Just three of us. I had a swell time. I stopped at a house just off the main drag and sat there talking with the people for an hour. I learned a few new words and got 2 canteens of cider. This cider is pretty good, but not half what our sweet cider is at home. Once in a while you find a place that has some fairly decent stuff, but those places are few and far between. The weather is swell now. They have a very early spring. It is like May at home. I received Anna's Christmas box a few days ago. Boy was it wonderful.

February 27, 1945 – Somewhere in France! – Dear Jeanette: The weather is fine here now. An occasional shower and that is all. As far as cigarettes go, we have plenty. We get 7 packs a week, which just about holds me through. Wish I could send you some, but who am I to encourage a young woman like you in such a vice. Thanks again for the swell letters. Write some more like them. Regards to the rest of your "molls". Love, Bill

March 23, 1945 – Somewhere in Germany! – Dear Jeanette: We are in combat now and they keep us rather busy. I have been attached to a couple other units and have seen some action, but the German's are running so fast there isn't to much excitement. I have been to "Metz" and also moved into "Merzig" with the rifle companies. Have been having a wonderful time driving all over this country. Yesterday I received your box with the fudge. Boy was it wonderful. The cigarette situation is ok over here. We get 7 packs a week. Luckies, Camels, Chesterfields, Old Golds, Rawleights and Chelseas. Wish I could send you some. These Ramsees and Sweet Caramels don't sound too hot. PS, I am in the 3rd Army.

April 4, 1945 – Somewhere in Germany! – Dear La: Just a note to let you know I am ok. Sorry I haven't written sooner, but just haven't had time. We have been moving day and night for more than a week now, trying to keep up with the "Jerries". We have crossed the Rhine and are pretty deep inside the "Faderland". Germany seems much cleaner and more modern than France. The homes especially. The only part I don't like about them are the kitchens and the bathrooms. The house we are in now, however, is the best so far. Running water, electricity, heat, radio and BEDS.

April 4, 1945 – Deep in the heart of Germany! – Dear Dad: Don't have much time to write now, moving pretty fast. We have been very busy chasing the "Jerries". Received your letter of the 13th – March – today. It was the first to catch up to me in about 10 days. This is the first I have had time to write in 10 days too. A couple of the larger cities I have seen are Mainz and Heunkirchen. Have seen many more, but not too important. Oh yes – I have seen the Rhine River from both sides and the middle. Right now, we are billeted in about the best house yet. Running water, electricity, radio – wine – really quite comfortable. The weather is typical April – raining every day. But we don't mind. It keeps the "Jennie" planes down. The A.A. boys who are with us have shot down 4 or 5 in the last 2 or 3 days. Today I almost broke my leg getting out of the jeep before they started firing. I am feeling fine. A couple days ago I suffered some from a case of the "you know what's". I guess it was the cider and wine. Maybe it was the Nescafe though. Must close now. Don't worry if you don't hear from me for a while.

April 4, 1945 – Deep in the heart of Germany! – Dear Jeanette: Everything is ok over here. The war is going as well as can be expected. If we keep on moving like we have been these past 10 days, we'll be fighting the Russians in 10 more days. We were in the 6th Armored Division for those few days and those boys really move. Germany isn't quite as picturesque as France but is much cleaner and much more up to date. The house we are living in now is comparable to one of our suburban homes in the states. We have electricity, running water, stove in every room, beds and radio. ALSO – wine in the cellar. I have to give it up though, because it gave me a case of the "you know what's". The weather is typical April weather - rain and more rain. This morning when the "Jerries" came over strafing us, I went on my face in a muddy field getting out of the jeep. It's a great life – but "War is HELL". Write soon and have someone send me a double edge razor in the next box.

April 19, 1945 – Germany – Dear Jeanette: Received your letter written the 4th just a few minutes ago. Sorry I haven't been writing so often but have been too busy. Also, I lost all of my stationary a few weeks ago. The mail is getting pretty slow now – we move too fast I guess for it to catch up with us.

April 28, 1945 – Germany! – Dear La: Everything is ok with me. Could go for a little more sleep right now, but I think I'll catch up in the next couple of days. I have received about 6 letters from Jeanette in the past week. She is keeping me well informed about everything at home. The weather is about the same, still raining. We are living in a salon now – very interesting – very interesting.

April 28, 1945 – Germany! – Dear Jeanette: Have received about 6 letters from you in the past week. Now that we are settled down again, I'll try and catch up on myself. The cartoons you have been enclosing are swell – and the one that Mary drew was hilarious. All the boys got a kick out of it. Everything is ok over here. If you have been reading the NY Daily News or listening to Walter Winchell, you will probably hear about our Division – it's the 65th. In 2 weeks, I'll bring you up to date on what's been going on.

April 30, 1945 -Somewhere in Germany! – Dear La: Have a few minutes now, so I thought I would let you know I am ok. On one of our moves, I lost all of my stationary, my pen and a lot of other stuff. Nothing important, but it has kept me from writing more. I am feeling fine, was sick one pm from something I ate – maybe too much C rations. The weather is warming up now, so in yours or Dad's next box could you send me some underwear.

May 8, 1945 – Somewhere in Austria! – Dear Jeanette: We got a pile of mail yesterday – it was all old stuff that is just catching up with us and as per usual two were from you. I don't think you have missed getting some in in every mail call. Well, the war is over – they say – we were in the last sector where they surrendered – and they keep pouring in. We have some working for us now. Tomorrow we hope to have our kitchen set up and go back to B rations. We have been eating K's, C's and 10 in 1's so long now that I feel like a hunk of cheese. Now that it is all over here, we are all sweating out the "CBI" (China, Burma, Southeast Asian and India-Burma theatres). Rumor has it that we'll get 20-day furloughs in the states before we go over there – BUT – rumors are rumors. The last letter from La had the picture taken Easter Sunday. You still squint when you get your picture taken. If I ever get a camera and some film, I'll

get some taken and send you all. I think we'll be back in garrison for sure in a few days. Write again soon, Love, Bill.

May 13, 1945 – Somewhere in Austria! – Dear La: Tonight, we are going to see the film about getting discharged, but I don't think it will do me any good. I have 29 points now and you need 85 to get out, so I guess I am stuck for 2 or 3 more years. If I go to the "CBI" I may get a furlough in the states, and then again, I may go directly to another theatre of operations. So, don't count on me being home for quite a while. Tomorrow we start training again. I think it is going to be difficult trying to get used to garrison life. We are living in what used to be a military academy but was taken over by the German's and became a barracks for training specialized troops. The building and grounds are very nice. A little dirty, but comfortable. We have 2 swimming pools and a shower room. There are some horses around and some of the fellows have been riding. I don't think we will be here much longer though. Must close now and write Jeanette, just received a box from her. Write soon. Love, Bill

May 25, 1944 – Enns, Austria – Dear La: Sorry to be so long in writing, but I have gotten so restless since V-E Day that I don't even feel like sitting down and writing a letter. In fact, there is so little to write about, it burns me up when I have to sit for an hour just to think of what to say. We are still living like kings. They stopped training, so we just do as we please all day. I work from 4 pm until midnight every night downstairs. I have a crew of 3 men under me and we check all German soldiers being discharged. It is rather monotonous, but time goes very quickly. Some of these men we discharge are older than Dad, and as old as Hughie; can you imagine Hughie in the Army at his age. We also have boys as young as 15, but they have only been in service a few months. I can speak a few words of German, but not enough to carry on a conversation. If I stay at this job long enough, I ought to pick up quite a bit more. Also, quite a few of them speak a little English and some speak French, so I don't have too much trouble. Whenever a German radio operator comes up to the desk, I always give him the 3rd degree and scare the daylights out of him, by taking notes off his papers and glaring at him, and just about get them crying when I pas them on. It's pathetic to look at the man's identification photo in his pay book and then look at him.

They have all aged about 20 years since the photograph was taken. I think our unit is going to get another battle star, so that will bring my points up to 31. So, if I am overseas for 2 more years, I stand a good chance of getting out. Of course, a lot can happen in 2 years, so I am not banking on anything. I hopped my allotment up to \$75 a month starting in July, so that should give me about \$610 at the end of the year. (I started the allotment in Nov last year). So, in 2 years after that I should be able to squeeze it up to \$2500 – a neat little bank roll to start college with. As yet they haven't started the education program, but when they do, I'll start by taking business law and business principals. I am going to write to Jeanette and get an idea of what she thinks I should take. I think I'll go down and get clean up and shower and shave, a dip in the pool and go for a ride before I go on shift. The "Cathedral of St. Florian" is about 4 miles from here, maybe I'll go down there. The town of St. Florian used to be the summer home of the of the Queen of Austria. There is a palace and beautiful gardens there. I'll write and tell you what it's like after I come back.

June 1, 1945 – Enns, Austria – Dear Jeanette: Just a note to thank you for the box. I received it the day before yesterday. The fudge was delicious, and I would like to get some more if you can get the sugar. Don't bother sending any candy or gum, I get plenty of that in PX rations. What I could use is food, non-rationed of course. Cheeses, sardines, spam, anything like that. There isn't much news around here. I am still working in the S-1 section discharging German soldiers. We should finish up in a day or two. We had over 20 thousand surrender to us the last day of the war. We have 2 divisions of SS men yet. I don't know when or what we are going to do with them. A couple of nights ago we had a show downstairs. A group of Austrians and Hungarians put on a swell show – plenty of leg art and humor. Last night the Colonel put on a party for all the officers in the Regiment. They had an orchestra (19 pieces) from Vienna. They all used to play in the Vienna Symphony. Really very nice. The singer was the best I have ever heard in my life. The ballet dancer was pretty good too. Of course, there was a big scandal over there. One Captain took a poke at the Colonel and another kept a nurse out too late. Yes indeed, best piece of scandal we've had yet.

June 5, 1945 – Enns, Austria – Dear Jeanette: I started this letter once. This time there will be quite a few interruptions as we are discharging German GI's now. All is quiet on the Western front --- until this PM when we have an Inspector General's inspection of quarters, clothes, appearance, etc, so you see we are getting back to garrison life. As long as they don't start training, we'll be ok. But when we do, that's when I want to come home. Latest rumor at 10 o'clock last night, we are leaving here for the states sometime around the 19th of this month, but of course, rumors will be rumors, and only once in a thousand times do, they prove true. But boy could I go for 30 days in the states this summer – it would be just like a summer vacation. I wouldn't count too much on that furlough though, but if anything comes down, I'll let you know. They drained the pool yesterday, so today I'll have to take my dip in the indoor pool, and boy is that cold. The other night I went up to see a show, it was "Conquest" with Humphrey Bogart. It would have been a good show, but the theatre is so damned hot that you just can't enjoy it, so we left before it was over. Last night we had the Division Swing Band down and had a band concert on the front lawn that was pretty good. Tonight, I don't know what I will do, but I am sure I can find a poker game somewhere?????? The weather is really beautiful here now, last night we had a light thunder shower, but its cooled things off nice. Some of the fellows have started going on 3 day and 7-day leaves to Paris and the Riviera, and resort cities in France. They go on a furlough basis, and I having had one last November, won't get one for quite a while, and I'd much rather go to the states for my leave. There is a German Lieutenant here that is about 3 years older than I and the two of us have been having a wonderful time swearing at each other in or respective languages. He just came up and asked who I was writing to, so I told him. He asked me to give you his regards. I don't know how you should take them, but he gave them to you anyways. The room we had our radio supply in is now our gym, and we have fixed it up pretty good. Today and for the next 4 days they are going to use it to check our company records, so we will have to fool around outside for a while.

June 9, 1945 -Enns, Austria – Dear Jeanette: Just received your letter of the 1st and very glad to get it. First letter in four days. Things are going along very

nicely here. We are the only company in the Regiment that isn't standing reveille or retreat and isn't doing anything else for that matter. Everyone just sleeps, eats and plays poker all day. I have all my money tied up in an allotment which leaves me about \$6.50 a month. Enough for here, but not enough for a pass to Paris (if I ever get one). I still work 4 hours a day discharging these German GI's and there doesn't seem to be an end in sight. This morning there was a bunch of 14, 15 and 16-year-old 'SS' kids going through. Just babies (The 'SS' is next under the Gestapo). We had a little trouble from them. What an Army!! Our Memorial Day services were held in front of our building. The Colonel made a rotten speech and about 10 fellows passed out from the heat. I am in training now. We fixed up a large room downstairs and I work out every night for an hour. Of course, I am crippled now, but hope to be ok in a few days. Latest rumor up to 12:00 yesterday had us area of operations here for 6 months to a year, then to the China, Burma, India (CBI). Yes, it is a great life. Sometime in the next week or 2 I am going on a boat ride from Linz to Passau and possibly Regensburg. I'll let you know what it's like on the Danube which ain't blue after all. Must close and write Dad. He's got a birthday coming up.

June 11, 1945 – Enns, Austria – Dear La: Just a note to let you know everything is ok with me here. I just wrote the bank and told them to let Dad come in and put his name on my account. That way if I ever get back to the States and need some cash to get home on, he will be able to get it and send it to me. Anna wrote and said I had \$255.00 in the bank now – pretty good eh what?? Beginning this month my allotment will be \$75.00 a month instead of \$25.00. From now on I'll have to live on about \$6.50 a month. That will be plenty for here, but if I ever get a pass to Paris or the Riviera, I'll probably have to borrow a little. The weather has been rather cold and rainy the past week, so I haven't been doing much. Every night from 7:00 to 8:00 I work out in the gym, then a hot shower and a cold dip in the pool. I have begun to feel a lot better already. Sometime this week, I hope to take a ride on the Danube in the Division boat. The trip is 8 hours, starting at Linz and going to Passau. We are all hoping that soon they will run it all the way to Regensburg. We lived just outside that city for about four days, and boy what a fight we put up to capture the city. That

was where they threw an 88 shell into the town and I drove up to about 25 yards of it. I sure got out of that town in a hurry.

June 17, 1945 – Enns, Austria – Dear La: Here it is, the middle of June and I don't know anymore about what is going to happen to us than the man in the moon. The "Stars and Stripes" said the 3rd Army would be occupation for a while, so I guess I'll be safe here for the time being. Haven't much to tell you since my last letter, except of course, my trip up the Danube from Linz to Passau. It was the most beautiful boat ride I have ever had in my life. Gosh I wish you could all have been along. It took us five hours to go up, and three to come back down. We had a good time. The band was on board and there was a loudspeaker system that pointed out the places of interest. It was really was a swell trip. I had a letter from Hank Vanderminden yesterday. He is only about 50 miles from here and we are both trying to get passes. I hope to go up and see him this weekend if I can get a jeep. He is in a town our Division took just before the war ended. Tomorrow I am going down to the Alps to a prisoner of war cage and do a little discharging. We should be finished up after this, I hope. My German lessons are progressing slowly but surely. If the man that is teaching me doesn't get discharged too soon, I ought to have a good start.

June 21, 1945 – Enns, Austria – Dear La: Is there anything wrong with Dad? I got a letter from him the other day, and he said he was going to Lake Placid for a while, and I was wondering if there was something going on that he didn't tell me about. He also said that he had lost his job and was going back to the quarries. I remember the last time he got hurt in the accident at the quarry, and I was at boy scout camp, and I didn't know anything about it until I got home. If there is something wrong, I would like to know about it right away. Also, now that he is not making the money he was at the plant, I don't think he will be able to send me the 10 bucks a month I asked for a few weeks ago. Today we started processing 'SS' men out at camp 5. We have about 10 days of work ahead of us and that is going to keep me pretty busy for a while. I haven't been horseback riding for about three days now, but the last time I went, I had a swell time, and didn't get saddle sore. I hope to go again in a few days. I tried to get a pass to go up and see Hank Vanderminden over this coming weekend, but

I can't because Division doesn't allow anyone out except on official business, and I don't think I can think up any good excuse. I only hope that his division isn't as bad as ours. One of these days they ought to lift the restrictions or move us out of this area, and then I will be able to see him.

June 27, 1945 – Enns, Austria – Dear Jeanette: Nothing much to report this week except the coming inspection this Friday. It is one of those GI horrors when you have to show everything the army has so generously given you. We have stopped work out at the POW camp and have been keeping quite busy the past two days cleaning equipment and getting ready. So far out at the camp I have done quite well. One camera, one pair of binoculars, two daggers, film, a little 25 caliber pistol, some medals, and an 'SS' ring (skull and crossbones). Yes, I have done quite well indeed. We should be finished in at least a week, I hope. And then if Division sees fit, I hope to hitch hike up to Passau to see Hank Vanderminden. Your letter about Dad was very encouraging. I had all kinds of visions of his being up there in a hospital or something like that. However, I do hope his new work is not too strenuous, the old man isn't getting any younger. I got the letter from the bank today telling me that they had added dad's name to my account, and they informed me that the balance of my account is \$280.00 as of the fourth of June, and that does not include June's allotment. Beginning with the June paycheck I am sending \$75.00 a month. That will bring my total up to \$650.00 at the end of twelve months of a "Class E Allotment". Not bad for "easy come, easy go Roberts" eh what? A couple of more years of this life and I'll be able to retire. Of course, I can think of a lot better ways of spending two years of my life. I don't remember telling you about my desire to take up business law. In fact, I don't remember telling anyone of that intention. Fact is, I thought I would take business law at school over here when and if they start. However, the latest reports, this education program for Army of Occupation is a big farce, so I don't expect to get much out of it. I am still at a loss as to what I want to study when I get out. Maybe take some sort of engineering course, or, as you suggested, business administration. The latter most likely. Our redeployment to the China, Burma, India theatre, as most of the fellows say, is going to happen when Austria gets its own government set up. I rather hope it will take them

quite some time to do this and keep us here for a decent length of time. Should be able to send some snapshots home in a couple of weeks. Yesterday Lieutenant Mazur took an indoor shot of myself and my crew out at the POW camp in the process of screening one of Hitler's infamous 'SS' men. I'll send it to you if it comes out.

July 8, 1945 – Enns, Austria – Dear Jeanette: Monday and Tuesday I worked at the POW camp. The weather was miserable, and I caught a slight cold. Wednesday being the fourth of July, we got the day off. A year ago, the fourth, I was on K.P. in Mississippi. Wonder what I'll be doing a year from now? Thursday, ten of us went on a trip to Berchtesgaden, and that is something to write home about. We left here at 5:30 in the morning and went to Linz where we caught a train that left at 6:30. The trip itself was really beautiful. In all it was about 250 miles round trip, and took us through Salzburg, and from there on we were in the Bavarian Alps. The rest of the train trip was uphill, and as we climbed you could get a better view of the valleys and mountains. Finally, at 11:35, we arrived at the city of Berchtesgaden. For such a small place they sure had a beautiful railroad station, but of course, Hitler used it quite often, so expense didn't mean much. From the station we walked about three blocks to the bottom of the mountain on which that man built his house. We waited about 5 minutes and then caught a ride up on one of the convoys going up. This part of the trip was really something, because the road was one of the steepest, best paved roads I have yet been on. We drove up the four miles of roadway in about 30 minutes and arrived in the parking lot just below his house. We then walked over to the hotel and tried to catch a ride up to the Eagles Nest, but had missed the convoy by 20 minutes, so decided to go over to the house. We passed Goering's house and the 'SS' barracks, and then his house. I can truthfully say that this whole area has been bombed beyond recognition. The house itself is just a shell, and there isn't a piece of glass in one piece anywhere. We only stayed for about 45 minutes, just long enough to take some pictures and look around for souvenirs, of which there were none. You can tell from what is left that the place must have been one of the showplaces of the world. It must have been really beautiful before the bombing. The kitchen was all

electric and big enough to feed 300 people. The room with the big window was huge, and was built at two levels, and at one end there was a very lovely fireplace. He also had a movie screen on one wall, and the projection room could match any in the biggest theatres in the states. Yes indeed, it was one of the most beautiful houses I have ever seen. The meals on the train were the best I've had since being here. We ate a first-class dinner, off real plates, with 3 pieces of flatware, in other words, nothing but the best. We got back to the barracks at 10:30 pm, took a shower and hit the hay. It was really a swell trip. Friday, I didn't have to work. Yesterday we ran out of forms, so I got out of working, but in the afternoon, we had a formation for one of the officers in our company, the Intelligence and Reconnaissance (I & R) platoon leader. He was decorated with the silver star. Tomorrow General Clark and his staff are going to drive through Enns on their way to Vienna, so I may get some pictures of the big affair. There are a pile of correspondents around here now waiting for his convoy to come through, and then they will go with him. You may see pictures in the city papers of him crossing the bridge at Enns into Russian occupied territory. Today, at last, we had the first sunny day in the past 2 weeks. This afternoon I went out by the pool and took a sun bath for a couple hours. Now, it is time for chow. Oh yes, we now have beer on tap all the time out by the kitchen. Hope you can see your way clear to smuggling a half pint of Seagram's VO, if you can. Be sure and pack it good, because if it arrived in more than one piece, and evaporated, I think I would die of heart failure.

July 9, 1945 – Enns, Austria – Dear La: Have had a very interesting past ten days. A week ago, last Sunday, three other fellows and myself borrowed Captain Feldman's jeep and went for a long ride. First, we went to Steyr, a small city about 15 miles from here. We couldn't stay there very long though as it was 11th Armored Division area, and it is against regulations to go out of the Division area. From there we went to St. Florian but didn't go through the buildings. However, one of our battalion headquarters is billeted in the palace there, and I have seen a good part of the place. Then we went into Linz and we drove all over the city looking at the damage done by our bombers, and it was really some damage. The rest of the trip was the best part of the whole day. We went

across the Danube and up the mountain on the other side. The road was a killer, and I was driving. Boy, I really thought I was going to roll right over backwards, but the jeep kept to the road, and we made it to the top. There is a church and a little town of about 250 population, and in front of the church is a stone platform overlooking the city and a huge part of Austria. The day was one of our clear ones and we all took a few pictures. I hope they come out, and if they do, I will send you a couple. I also have a few postcards from my Sunday trip. Thursday four of us again took the Division Special Security Office (SSO) trip to Berchtesgaden (Hitler's home). This too was a lovely trip. We had to get up at 5:00 am and we didn't get back until 8:30 pm. We left the Linz railroad station at about 6:30 am and arrived at the city of Berchtesgaden. The trip from Linz to Berchtesgaden was very beautiful. We went through Salzburg, and then up into the Bavarian Alps. The city was very quaint, but also very modern. The railroad station was very new and quite good looking. We caught a convoy of trucks going up to the top, or I should say, Hitler's house. The road up was one of the steepest I have ever ridden up. We didn't go all the way to the top, but the fellows that have, said that from Hitler's house to his Eagle's Nest was even steeper. We finally got to his little mountain hideaway and what a mess that place was. Our bombers certainly bomber that place. There wasn't a whole house left on the whole side of the mountain. We saw what was left of Goering's house and the 'SS' barracks, and the big hotel. Hitler's house we really looked over. There wasn't anything left of it except the walls and floors, but from what we could see, what a beautiful place it must have been before. The view from up there was something in itself. You could look way down into the valley and see the houses, they looked like pinpoints, and then turn your head a few inches to either left or right and see snowcapped mountains. It was a trip I shall never forget. The meals on the train were the best I have had since we've been over here. We ate a first-class dinner, had waiters, and very good food. The whole train was very comfortable and very modern. Most of the engines in Bavaria are electric and very smooth running. Yesterday and today I went out by the pool and took a sun bath. Today I have the best tan I have had in my life, I think.

July 19, 1945 – Enns, Austria – Dear Jeanette: According to the latest authentic rumors that have emulated from the Colonel's driver, there will be about eleven thousand of us leaving the good old 65th in the very near future. But after knowing the old boy's boy for ten months, I take everything he says with 99% salt added. This rumor has either spread very fast, or there is some truth in it. Time will tell. Well, yours truly is now a temporary switchboard operator, and I have to work 3 hours out of every 18. It is a lot of fun, but a little dangerous for a beginner, as there are a lot of officers that think they are using civilian phones and can call anyone anytime. And when you try to tell them different, they get awfully excited. Just the other day some 2nd Lieutenant came in and chewed me up and down for not unplugging him from the Division switchboard for the last 15 minutes. The board was very busy and after he watched my hands flying around for about 10 minutes straight, he thought better of giving me hell. For the past four nights I have been trying to call Hank Vanderminden, but there are so many stations to go through That I can't even hear his Regimental operator. I have a new possibility tonight, so maybe I can talk to him for a few minutes. In my off-duty hours, I have been helping my radio section do a little remodeling. We have taken over the whole first floor north wing and have thus far started our gym and theatre combination, our storeroom and our beer hall. The gym is finished, but the stage and curtains aren't quite done. We hope to have that room finished by Sunday. The bar room we have just started and have a lot of work to do on it yet but hope to have it finished by a week from this Saturday. I only hope we can keep it well stocked with decent beverages. It promises to be a big-time room that will match any \$2.50 cover joint in the states. I only hope we are here long enough to enjoy a good cold glass of beer.

July 19, 1945 – Enns, Austria – Dear La: For the past week, I can truthfully say that I have been quite busy. First, I am now a temporary switchboard operator, a job I like and something to keep me out of mischief, and also it occupies my mind. Secondly, the radio section has taken it upon themselves to remodel the whole north wing first floor. There are two large rooms and one small one. The largest of the three we are making into a swell gym and temporary theatre. The fellows are going all out on it, and it promises to be a darn good-looking place

that we hope will match, in miniature of course, the large theatres in the states. The middle room is our storeroom and the third large room we are making a bar and dance hall. This room is very pretty, and has a lot of possibilities, and we are getting a lot of help on it, so it ought to be the pride of the company. Yes, I have been having a pretty good time this past week. The weather has brightened considerably and today I went out for a nice long swim and sun bath. You would be surprised if you could see the tan I have. I don't think I have ever had such a tan in my life, and I am quite proud of it. The day before yesterday I took a nice long ride around the country, but it had to start raining before we got back. For the past four days, I have been trying to put in a call to Hank Vanderminden, but I have to go through so many other boards that by the time I get his Regiment on the other end, I can't even hear the operator. I am going to try again tonight through other channels and hope that I can reach him. Well, there is a remote possibility that I may get home before too long, but as the information I have is just in the rumor stage I don't hold much faith in it. Even if it does mean the Pacific, I would sure like to get home for 30 days this summer. I shall let you know as soon as anything develops. My birthday was just another day. In fact, I forgot about it until about ten o'clock when I remembered I was twenty years old. I got four letters in the afternoon, and that was a present bigger than you can imagine.

July 29, 1945 – Enns, Austria – Dear Jeanette: Something seems to be wrong with our mail around here now. None of us have been getting half the service we did have. I guess they are using all the planes and boats for the big shots to come over. Anyway, it was swell to hear from you. Boy, I sure wish I could be at the lake with you for a week, but I don't think it will be this summer. For awhile there I thought I might have been home before the end of this month, but that is quite impossible right now. According to the latest rumors, this outfit will leave for the states sometime in September. Damn, I wish they would make up their minds and tell us exactly what is going to happen to us. For awhile there we were all sweating out preparation for overseas replacement (POR) to some outfit that was going to stay AO (area of operations) for a year or two, but I think they have slowed down on their shipments, and they are going to hold the

Division as a whole and then ship it back to the states for de-activation. And who knows, maybe by that time the war in Japan will be over. God help me if I ship way over there and then have to stay AO for two years. I have signed up for some courses in the army education program (AEP) but I don't know when they are going to start. It will give me something to take up part of my time and keep me busy. The choice of subjects was lousy so don't be too upset by my choice. (1) Psychology. (2) mechanical Drawing. (3) Spoken French. (4) Public Speaking. Most of the courses were of first and second year high school level, and I didn't want to waste my time on them. If we are here another 4 months, the second group of courses will be coming out, and maybe they'll have something worth while on it. Personally, I doubt if we will be here long enough to even finish these first courses. You know, I still can't decide what to take in college when I get out. I have thought and thought about it, but still can't decide, and the damn thing is bothersome as the devil. If I could only get home for those thirty days and look around and talk to someone who knows something about education, instead of these GI trained bums, I could probably decide. Oh well, so much for that. Saturday night we had the formal opening of the Rumpus Room, our bar and dance hall. It was a success, except that we only had warm flat beer to drink. Every time we try to get something else, somebody up at Division comes along and takes it away from us. The room really looks swell and will be even better when it is all finished. The bar is curved and has an aluminum front with lights up at the top shining down on the aluminum. The back of the bar is blue and silver and quite fancy. We have 25 round tables and four chairs for each table. The band stand is raised about 14" off the floor and that too is curved. I think it is about the most high class one in the regiment. I'll let you know just as soon as anything happens over here, and don't be too surprised if you should get a change of address card from me.

August 22, 1945 – About 20 miles from Munich, Germany – Dear Jeanette: As you can see, we have moved from Enns, and are now in Germany. It was a shame we had to leave that place after we got it all fixed up. But like the Colonel says, this is one step closer to home, and I only hope he is right. Nothing definite has come down yet and we are all sweating it out. As far as we know,

they are going to break the Division down into three groups. The first group will be those with rather low point scores, and they will stay in outfits that are staying here as army of occupation. The second group will be those with points in the middle, and they will go to outfits that are going home in a few months, or at least by spring. The third group are those with high point scores, and they will probably go home with the 14th Armored Division sometime next month. Of course, I will be in either the first or second group, and have my fingers crossed that I will get into the second, but of course that remains to be seen. I have 31 points now, with a possible 37-38-39-42-43-44, according to Victory over Japan day (VJ day) and whether they decide to give us five points for the combat infantry badge. Army of occupation is no picnic over here now. They are doing some of the damndest things that you sometimes wonder if there is an ounce of intelligence in the heads of the big shots. Three months in some of the outfits I have heard about would just about drive me nuts. God, I hope that somehow, I can get home very soon. Peace time Army in the states is better than what is going on over here. I wish some of the folks at home could read the letters to the editor in the Stars and Stripes. I guess I could last though. This place we are living in now is almost as comfortable as it was in Enns except for one thing. We are living in the warehouses on the area that Germany had one of its largest explosive plants. Of course, the buildings are all small and well dispersed, but there is no telling when one of them will go off. The POW's go around every morning and wet down the powder but still one goes off every once in a while. I shall be very glad to get out of here for that reason. We are supposed to all be out of here by the 31st of the month, and we low pointers even sooner. I expect to leave here tomorrow if I have to be assigned to another outfit. Don't write until you get my change of address and I shall send that off just as soon as I get it. Tell John that I too hope I will be able to go deer hunting with him this year. I have a couple of 38 pistols I want to try out.

Now in HQ Company, 39th Infantry Division:

September 2, 1945 – Geisenfeld, Germany - Dear Jeanette: Our Army post office (APO) closed and we have been moving all over this God forsaken country this past week. We lived in an old ammo dump for 8 days without a mishap, except

one small fire that did not explode, thank heaven. Last Tuesday morning we got up at 2:30 – 3:30 and boarded the first series of trucks and drove about 20 minutes. There we unloaded our duffle bags, me with about 150 pounds, and waited for the next bunch of GI's and trucks. At 5:20 we loaded and drove to the railroad station. There we unloaded and got aboard freight cars. What a ride. What would have taken us 4 hours by jeep took us 19 hours by train, and it was one of the hottest days of the year. At last about 6:30 we arrived at Dachau and unloaded – only to find we had been on the wrong train. Then we waited until 8:15 and the trucks came and brought us here. We were all sweating out rifle companies and were quite relieved to spend the night in the depot. Next morning at 5:30 they got us up and began reading names off, and luckily, I hit Regiment again. I am in the radio section still, but there is nothing for radio operators to do, so we sleep most of the time. This town is about the same size as Enns, but much cleaner. Our billets aren't as good, but the food is the best I've had in a long time. Yesterday they tell us that we won't be here much longer, as all men who transferred from the 261st Regiment are going to the 60th Regiment here, and that has a bad reputation for it's eye wash. You can expect another change of address from me sometime soon. In case you send me a Christmas gift, I would greatly appreciate a pint of Seagram's VO, but be sure it is well camouflaged. You can do that by putting it inside a loaf of bread, or a cake without sugar. I should think that a pint bottle would do very nicely. Don't expect me home by Easter either. 39 points ain't much. Last night I called Hank Vandermindens Regiment and through some stroke of luck was able to hear his switchboard operator. There was one catch – Hank had just left a couple of days before for a three-day pass in Paris. Maybe in a week or so he'll be back, and I'll try again. He's got 72 points as of VJ day and will probably be a civilian by Christmas, the lucky boy. Say hello to John and tell him I won't be able to go hunting with him this time, but that I am hoping like hell to go fishing with him next spring. See you soon – I hope. Love, Bill

From Corporal William Roberts, now in HQ Company, 60th Infantry Division:

September 18, 1945 – Geisenfeld, Germany – Dear La: We haven't received any mail yet and it is 22 days today. Everything here is ok, except about 90% of the

company have nasty colds, including me. The natives tell us it usually starts snowing the last part of October, so we'll probably have a long hard winter. I am working on the switchboard again, so I get out of a lot of training. Last week I took a few hours off and went for a ride down to Aichach, Germany and am now going horse back riding quite often. In fact, today I feel darn lame. Yesterday about 7 of us went out and had a race. I got all plastered with mud, but I won. A couple of close ones almost threw me, but thanks to many hours over here I didn't fall off. We really had a swell time. I've been to about 8 movies in the past 2 weeks, and also up to Ingolstadt, Germany to the Red Cross Club. I wish I knew when to tell you to expect me home, but the way the war department is messing things up, none of us have any idea. I only have 39 points, and not much hope for anymore, so I doubt very much if I'll be home before next fall. Maybe something will come up though. In case you want to send me anything for Christmas, Dad has a list of things I need. In a few weeks, I'll send you some money to buy him a present.

September 27, 1945 – Geisenfeld, Germany – Dear Jeanette: Tonight, I have been entrusted with that time-honored job, which only a select few are able to be accepted – Corporal of the Guard!! I can't tell you how thrilled I was to get chosen, etc, etc – bullshit. What an outfit. It reminds me more of the Boy Scouts than the Army. Yesterday I had the misfortune of being sent along with the Colonel and what a guy. He's the youngest full Colonel I have ever of in the Infantry and I think maybe it's gone to his head. Oh well, who are we to reason why, we are but to do or die – and I mean that literally. I don't like this place at all because the officer's in authority won't give us half a break and are afraid of going to see the old man. It is strongly rumored that this company is going to Ingolstadt, Germany in a couple weeks, so perhaps we'll get a good deal out of it, I hope. Last night I took off for a couple hours and went up to the NCO Club to drink a little beer, but the stuff is so flat that you can just about stomach one. Also went to the theatre and saw a Ukrainian show. Some very good singing and folk dancing. The night before I saw "Brewster's Millions" but didn't like it. While we were in Aichach, Germany last week I saw "Woman in the Window" and another that I have forgotten. I've been to more movies here the past ten

days than all the time we were in Austria. When and if we go to Ingolstadt, Germany I am going to try and get down to see Hank Vanderminden. We'll be right on the main highway to his corps and Division Command Post, so it shouldn't take too long, all I need now is the pass. We had a little excitement here yesterday. Night before last, 3 stockade prisoners escaped, and we have more officers floating around than I have seen in a coons age. There isn't much more news. None of our mail has caught up with us, and it has been almost 2 weeks since our old Army Post Office (APO) closed. Don't forget to get those Christmas boxes off by the 14th of September. Hope to see you soon, but by the sound of things, will probably die of old age over here. Love, Bill

Now Sergeant William Roberts, HQ Company, 60th Infantry Division:

November 9, 1945 – Ingolstadt, Germany – Dear La: Hope you haven't worried too much since my last letter, but I have been doing quite a bit of traveling and work. Rather unexpectedly last month, Sandy (one of my buddies) and I decided to take a furlough and get away from this mad house. Much to our surprise, we left the day after applying for it. We went to Nice, France on the French Riviera for 7 days of merriment and rest. The trip took 48 hours but going down we had cushioned seats and did quite well for ourselves. The weather, I'm sorry to say, wasn't what we expected. We hit it during the rainy season and we only had 3 really nice days. But even with the rain it was very warm. We stayed at a swell hotel up on the side of the mountain overlooking the city and the sea. The food was wonderful, and I think I put on a little weight. We spent most of our time walking around the city. Saw movies, a Broadway play and a New York stage review. Played golf twice and sat on the boardwalk watching the surf. The Red Cross Club was the most beautiful I have ever seen. At night we went to one of the hotels along the shore where they have dances every night. It was really a wonderful seven days, and I hope to go back as soon as I can. So far as expenses go, there are very few. Our room and board cost \$12.00 for 7 days. I had some pictures taken, and when I find a big enough envelope, I'll send you the big one. Since I got back, I found most of the old fellows gone on points, on pass or furloughs, and to school. Morgan went to Scotland for a couple of months of school. I am now holding down the radio section until the new chief gets back

from England, and believe me, it is no picnic now. We are having a big change over in troops and I have to check everyday to see if we got anymore. I'll be glad when Rudy gets back, I miss my afternoon nap.

January 10, 1946 – Ingolstadt, Germany – Dear La: Class 2 in radio school has started and I am tied up a little with that. I have really been so darn mad at the Company Commander and the War Department that I don't like to sit down and write for fear of saying something that isn't nice. Everyone is now pissed off at this redeployment slow down that we are all more or less sitting on a powder keg of bad feelings and resentment. For me, I don't have a legitimate gripe yet, but the thought of having to stay here for from two to four extra months is not at all pleasing and has thrown a very obnoxious monkey wrench into my plans for the future. It looks very much as though we were here and forgotten. They didn't have any trouble getting us here, and we didn't have any gripes in coming, but it's hard to believe that they can't draft and enlist enough men to fill occupation leave. The strikes at home don't seem to bother the fellows too much because they don't know enough of the details. But, all in all, most of the guys want out when their time comes. I know the fellows in the company with 50 points and up must be hurting. They were supposed to leave today, but now heaven only knows when they will, and it's kind of hard to do everyday work when you are eligible for discharge and are still deep in the heart of occupation. There is a kid here in my room with 54 points and he is not in a very good mood right now. I guess I must be boring you with my tales of woe, but that is just about all there is to talk about. The weather is quite cold but very little snow. Today it is raining, and the streets and roads are quite icy. Last Saturday night, another fellow and myself had to make a special run to Division at 6:00 pm. It's about 90 miles, but we had one of the nicest nights in a month, and it only took us six hours to get there and come back. But I wouldn't do it again for \$100.00.

January 23, 1946 – Ingolstadt, Germany – Dear La: My luck has been a little better over here than it was in the States, especially on the Post Exchange (PX) raffle. Did Dad tell you about my winning a Leica camera. It's really a beauty. It cost \$37.00, but at home it would be about \$125.00. If I can have luck like that when it comes to getting started home, I should be well satisfied. By rights, I

should start in May, but will be expecting the worse, so if I get home and in civilian clothes by the end of June, I'll think I'm doing good. Hope to see you in the spring.

Feb 6, 1946 – Ingolstadt, Germany – Dear La: Little by little our mail is catching up with us. Our mail is very sporadic, and perhaps one day we'll get a letter that took a week to 10 days. And then three or four days later we'll get one that took three or four weeks. As long as it gets here though, it's okay. Yesterday, Sandy got eight letters that were sent in August, see what I mean. The weather here is lousy. It isn't cold, but it rains just about every day. No snow, just mud, and personally, I'd rather have the snow. There hasn't been enough fallen here to go skiing at all. However, there is still plenty down around Garmisch, Germany and I had intended to go down there, but there is a big gas shortage over here, and heaven only knows when we'll be able to get to Munich to catch the train. Tomorrow some of the fellows are going home. They have 50 to 51 points, or 39 months service. So, it won't be long now, and I can expect to take off. I hope to make it in May, but if I have to wait until June, I won't be too disappointed. Please don't worry if you don't hear from me too regularly. Nothing is going to happen around here, and I have been fairly busy up until last Saturday. Monday the 11th and for the following 5 weeks I'll probably be busy too, as I have to run the school, so please don't worry. See you this spring.

Bill left Europe on April 27, 1946. He was discharged from the military at Fort Dix, New Jersey on May 2, 1946.